

Appendix F: State of the Meeting Reports

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Spiritual State of the Meeting 2005

Atlanta Monthly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends

Do you respect that of God in everyone though it may be expressed in unfamiliar ways or be difficult to discern? How can we make the meeting a community in which each person is accepted and nurtured, and strangers are welcome?
From Quaker Faith and Practice, of Britain Yearly Meeting.

We see the meeting as a growing, diverse and constantly changing community where every First Day we welcome new people. A growing number of seekers find meaningful worship here and are drawn into this community. An Adult Religious Education Class, a Spiritual Nurture Group and a weekly Bible Study offer opportunities for small groups to support and deepen spiritual journeys.... [Yet,] we often find it hard to know how to be welcoming, accepting and nurturing as our numbers grow and it becomes harder to know all who worship here. When we consider what the meeting needs now and the spiritual gifts that we would like to offer we name: compassion for each other, wisdom, love for the Spirit, finding ways of embracing each other, finding something of value in the "rain that must fall" in each life, recognizing what good things we already have, loving people in spite of—even for—their limitations, openness to what community members say to us, courage to speak to people when we feel strongly about their ministry, and that each member be able to find that of God in everyone.

From Ministry and Worship 2005 State of the Meeting Report, Atlanta Monthly Meeting

Spiritual Health and Growth of the Meeting

Atlanta Friends wrestled with the spiritual health of the Meeting during 2005. Creating an awareness of the process of Quaker worship amidst dissonant messages was and continues to be our challenge. As we reflect upon our year, we reaffirm that the Spirit may lead us in non-traditional ways. During the year, our experience of worship collectively and individually varied, from finding the corporate worship on First Days rich and nurturing with the gift of vocal ministry through Spirit-led messages, to Meetings full of popcorn, political or accusatory messages that left worshippers angry, tense or unsettled. Ministry and Worship committee sponsored two forums to help us consider how to deepen our worship and vocal ministry. One focused on the article, "The Divine Source of Vocal Ministry," by Benjamin Lloyd, *Friends Journal*, and the second focused on "Four Doors to Meeting for Worship," by William Taber. Both were well attended and provided a space for very personal worship sharing. In the words of Ministry and Worship, "We share a commitment to a gathered Meeting for worship where a palpable sense of the presence of God brings us together."

The religious education program is a growing community with a healthy number of families that sustains 5 classes, averaging a total of 25 children each week. Many of the same teaching volunteers recommit year after year. The committee continues to search for new volunteers so that the spiritual health of the children can be nourished not only by parents teaching their own children but also by the larger community.

The Nominating committee also searched for new volunteers as 27 positions of responsibility, more than usual, became vacant during the year. Yet, many stepped forward by the end of the year, leading the committee to conclude, "We are struck by the vitality of this Meeting, the willingness of newcomers and lifelong Quakers to find ways to serve the community."

The annual Gathered Meeting Retreat in March focused on spiritual growth of the meeting through its topic, "Quaker Spirituality: Seeking the Personal Image of the Divine." Wade Wright from the Millville Monthly Meeting and his traveling companion John Brady of Abington Meeting, both of Pennsylvania, led the retreat. Participants, a cross section of "seasoned" Friends and newcomers, commented that they were able to find ways to interpret their own image of the divine and find ways of listening from one to the other about personal spirituality.

In our Meetings for Worship with Attention to Business, we spent a third of the year considering revisions to our Faith and Practice, proposed by Southern Appalachian Yearly Meeting and Association (SAYMA). Although lengthy, these sessions helped F(f)riends discern and meld individually and corporately held beliefs.

With great joy we approved in Fourth month the request of Gwinnett Worship Group to become a preparative meeting under our care, and in Tenth month we took under our care Anneewakee Creek Worship Group (ACWG) that meets in Douglasville, west of Atlanta. ACWG had formerly been under the care of SAYMA. In Atlanta, the numbers on any given First day are about 110 to 120. We welcomed into membership 6 persons: Sara Butler, Ceal and Mark Wutka, Derek Coulson, Megan Dowdy, and Lissa Place. We accepted Marguerite Rece's transfer of membership from Augusta (GA) Monthly Meeting and Jonah McDonald's from Memphis (TN). We also marked the death of Mary Elizabeth Jackson Zimmerman in First month. We held memorial services for Spencer Oedel, 19 years, and Neva Hamilton Fisk, a member until 2000, when she and husband George transferred to Newtown Square MM. Neva was remembered for her work with *Friendly Woman* and with the founding of Friends School of Atlanta. Our membership is now 145, 17 of whom reside out of the area.

Welcoming and Inclusiveness

The Committee on Undoing Racism in Atlanta Friends Meeting provides a "Listening Ear" two First Days per month for anyone with a concern about racism. It also keeps a box in which confidential concerns can be left in writing. The committee arranged for Bert Skellie to offer a one-day workshop, modeled after a one-week workshop at Friends General Conference (FGC), "Practicing Ending Racism Among Friends," to help individuals learn how to hold themselves accountable for racist actions or failure to act when witnessing racism, and to role play different responses to situations involving racism.

The Care and Counsel committee prepared welcome packets for newcomers. At the rise of Meeting the person who closes meeting welcomes visitors, who stand and introduce themselves. Visitors may speak to members of Care and Counsel with questions about Quakerism and our Meeting. An announcement sheet is available for all about events in the life of the Meeting.

A group of parents, Religious Education teachers, and those interested in the Meeting's youth programs continued to meet monthly (Sept – May) to discuss ways in which to raise non-racist children in our Meeting. Another small group of individuals, "ORAIARH," or "Our Role As Individuals In America's Racial History," meets weekly to hold themselves accountable and support each other in working against racism in their lives. Participants in these groups make sure our library and First Day School have books relating to these topics and have made a bibliography of our holdings on these subjects. One individual wrote up a list of suggestions for talking to kids about race and class in relation to Hurricane Katrina.

The Finance committee launched a Raise the Roof campaign to replace the roof and insulation and change the heating/cooling units. These items will also help the Meeting use energy more efficiently. In addition the campaign will fund a new hearing assistance system that will contribute to the Meeting's efforts to be inclusive by making Meeting for Worship more accessible to those with hearing difficulties.

Discussion began about our email discussion service and we formed an ad hoc committee to set up some rules for use of the discussion list and to create a separate announcement list for those who only wanted limited announcements pertaining to the life of the Meeting. The committee developed queries designed to encourage those on the discussion list to consider more carefully the perspectives of others and also their own responses to those with differing opinions and perspectives. The early results are that those using the discussion list appear to be more sensitive to other's viewpoints and are responding with respect.

Outward Direction and Social Justice

Atlanta Friends are active in many concerns. Peace and anti-war efforts, a women's shelter, prison concerns, assistance to individuals who work in public schools, legislative issues and Green Friends are some of the causes Friends support. In the spring we minuted our support for Joe Parko's witness of peace in the Middle East on a trip to Palestine and Israel with the delegation "Every Church a Peace Church." We continued to fund scholarships for university students in our sister community, El Sitio, El Salvador. We helped fund rebuilding in the Gulf Coast region in the wake of devastation by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita with donations to AFSC and grassroots organizations such as Common Ground. Two of our members undertook a long bike trip on the Natchez Trace to raise money for hurricane relief. ORAIARH members finished a brochure highlighting neighborhood safety and racial stereotyping and distributed it to households in neighborhoods near the Meeting and where members lived. They also sent it to churches, schools, city government organizations and neighborhood groups in Decatur.

We ask the Spirit to guide us in continuing to be welcoming and affirming of each other and the diversity of experience each of us brings to the meeting community so that we may "walk cheerfully over the earth answering that of God in everyone."

Respectfully submitted,
Karen terHorst Morris
Clerk, 2005

Berea Monthly Meeting State of the Meeting Report – May 2006

Berea Friends have been busy this past year adjusting to all the activities involved in owning a meeting house, and exploring different ways we can make this new building purchase of spiritual value to both ourselves and the community at large. We feel very positive about the multi-year process we underwent in reaching clarity on the purchase of a meetinghouse. That careful discernment has led to a meeting of Friends eager to explore the new opportunities afforded by the purchase of a place of worship.

With the purchase of the meetinghouse individual Friends have discovered new ways to serve the meeting. Three new positions were created –Beauty and Order Coordinator, Rentals Coordinator, and Building Maintenance Coordinator. Friends serving in these positions have shown a great deal of skill and dedication. An energetic and talented Landscaping Committee has also been formed, and their work has given our meeting the opportunity to explore testimonies of earthcare and right use of the land. It has been a joy to see all these individuals using their talents and gifts in the service of our meeting.

Berea Friends held an open house on October 23, and invited the wider community. We titled it a Remembrance and Recognition occasion, to celebrate our purchase of the meetinghouse and to remember Friends who have passed on. The open house was lovely, with bulb plantings, tours of the space, and a meeting for worship. We were grateful to the Friends who attended from other SAYMA monthly meetings.

Since the purchase, Berea Friends have been sharing their space with a long-term renter, the Learning Co-Op. The Learning Co-Op is a family learning cooperative that provides meeting space and resources for all ages. It has been a learning experience to share our space and resources with another group, and a pleasure seeing the meetinghouse utilized during the week by a lively and energetic group of parents and children. Renting our space to different groups has made us think through issues of liability, communication and responsibility that continue to challenge us as we work to discern them in the proper spirit.

We have utilized our building for Quakers and the community by hosting different events. We hosted the SAYFers in March, and it was great fun to have the teenagers staying with us. We also sponsored a two-day Nonviolent Communication workshop for the community, hosted the All-KY gathering (an annual gathering of Kentucky monthly meetings), and opened up our space for a Quaker Jam. Geeta McGahey visited us in March as a representative from Right Sharing of World Resources, and we enjoyed her presentation.

Friends continue to struggle with our children's program, as the children have been resistant to cooperating with teachers. It has been difficult to fill the position of children's program coordinator, due to the difficulty of that position, and parents are currently in discussion on how best to serve our children and the meeting. Highlights of the children's program include trick-or-treating for UNICEF, taking Valentines to the nursing home, working with adults to prepare cookies and Christmas cards for people in our local jail, making a Valentines dinner for parents, and having a movie night.

Our start time for meeting has required a great deal of discussion this past year. We are now meeting at 10 a.m. instead of 9 a.m., and this has affected different members/attenders' schedules in positive and negative ways. We continue to thresh that issue, and revisit it every couple of months. It has highlighted the lifestyle differences in our members/attenders, as it deals with issues of scheduling, young families and older Friends, and preferences of when people worship.

Brian Boggs and Pat Acevedo, both of whom were active members of our Meeting, divorced this past year. Pat is still a regular attender, but Brian is not currently attending. Friends continue to stay in contact with both of them, and work to handle the situation with grace and love as we face the hurts and wounds that result from the break-up of a family.

Our meeting has also embraced a care-taking role regarding Nancy Lee-Riffe who has struggled with poor health this past year. Our women's group, who meets twice a month, and others have helped her discern her needs and how to face new limitations in her life. They have taken on supportive tasks such as calling, visiting, and transportation.

Currently we have 56 members, and our average attendance is around 20 – 25. We have seen an increase in college students attending. The ten children attending range from 3 months to 12 years, and we have two teens who are active in the SAYF program. One of them, Raffi Kennedy, will be a co-clerk for the teen program at the FGC gathering.

Beth Myers, Clerk

Birmingham Friends Meeting

State of the Meeting Report: May 2005 - April 2006

Our meeting rejoiced in the December birth of Aubrey Turner, son of longtime member Connie Hill and Doug Turner and little brother to Emma. We now have three birthright Friends! We welcomed two new families with children and have divided our First Day School into two age groups. There is a planned program for the older children, and play or art activities for the younger ones. The children helped prepare colorful sacks full of personal care products for Katrina survivors. All of the children come into meeting for worship for the last fifteen minutes. We are energized by their participation and interest. In months where there is a fifth Sunday, we have an intergenerational activity which is enjoyed by the whole meeting.

The adults completed a careful study of Rex Ambler's book on the writings of George Fox called Truth of the Heart. We read the Pendle Hill Pamphlet, Holding One Another in the Light, reviewed sections of SAYMA's Faith and Practice, wrote letters of concern about the devastation in Darfur and also to a soldier who went AWOL and is now in prison. Our meeting contacts for FCNL and FWCC keep us informed of the work of these organizations. We are completing two minutes, one against the use of torture and another calling for immediately withdrawal of our troops in Iraq. A representative from Alabama Arise, an organization focusing on economic justice, presented an excellent program on the current Alabama budget and its severe funding inadequacies. Our simple supper rotates to different homes once a month; the host prepares soup, someone else brings bread, and others come to relax and enjoy the fellowship. Our women's group is more ecumenical than Quaker and gathers on second Sunday evenings of each month.

Our meetinghouse continues to be a place of much activity. In the fall, we hosted a neighborhood picnic and added to this group students from the World of Opportunity program where one of our attenders is a tutor. Some Scattergood Friends School students and teachers stayed in the meetinghouse during their spring trip to visit Civil Rights sites and to participate in a rebuilding project along the coast. In February, we took a hard look at our own racist attitudes and behaviors with Bert Skellie from the Atlanta Friends Meeting. The SAYMA representative meeting was held in Birmingham in April; we were thrilled to welcome so many Friends to Birmingham. The Alabama Coalition for Peace and Justice and the National Organization for Women hold regular meetings in our building. Our meeting photographers provide us with loads of pictures which we have placed on a display wall, much to the delight of the children as well as the adults.

Owning a meetinghouse continues to present fiscal and upkeep challenges. We had major and expensive plumbing repairs last summer that required digging up part of the backyard and replacing pipes that had been there for decades. Regular workdays are sufficient for periodic cleaning and have provided some enjoyable times for our community. We are very fortunate to have had two renters for most of the year; we enjoy visiting with them, they occasionally join us for meeting for worship, and we are grateful for the consistent income. After two robberies, we now have a security system that is being funded mostly by our tenants; we appreciate that generous gift.

We also support our neighborhood school by donating what we would pay in real estate taxes; our meeting is a Partner in Education for Birmingham City Schools.. This year, the contribution went toward a new playground. One of our members, who is in a wheelchair, actively participated during the playground construction day.

Birmingham Friends are active in interfaith, peace and social concerns. Children and adults joined a throng of people on the "Walk as One" sponsored by NCCJ. We had a display table at a large peace rally in October and gave away lots of "War is not the Answer" bumper stickers. Next year, we will order more. Unfortunately, there are too many occasions when we display our banner against the death penalty which we hang when there is an execution in the US. Two members participate in the Alabama Faith Council, we are sponsors of Alabama Arise, and one member is involved with the Alabama Public Transportation Initiative. We have responded to invitations from several churches by presenting information on and facilitating discussions about Quakers. Our meeting joined with Greater Birmingham Ministries and other agencies to establish a chapter of the Gulf Coast Listening Project, a program of the Rural Southern Voice for Peace. We have been interviewing Katrina survivors living in this area and will review their stories for trends and quotes which call attention to the ongoing needs of the evacuees. We are now active in several SAYMA committees: Ministry and Nurture, Peace and Social Concerns, and Personnel.

As we look to the next year, we are aware of our growing edges. Our meeting remains small; we have a core of regular attenders, some sporadic attenders, and a larger group of people who have shown some interest but who do not return. We would like to attract more newcomers as well as be more intentional about providing materials and opportunities for discussion for newer attenders. We will begin using queries more frequently. Our First Day School program needs a core group of committed teachers and a curriculum so that our children have more experience with Quaker history and values. Our Social Concerns committee has been inactive; we hope to revitalize this and become more involved in social justice work, locally and beyond. We continue to be especially concerned for those with chronic or recurrent illnesses as well as others with the responsibilities of aging parents.

When we reviewed the past year, we talked about what we cherished about our meeting. We agreed that it is a place where differences of beliefs and political orientations can be expressed while love and acceptance are maintained among us.

Connie LaMonte, Clerk

State of Celo Meeting

May 2006

As we discussed the state of our meeting at Ministry and Care this week, we realized once again that the heart of Celo Meetings, and always has been, Meeting for Worship. We may falter in our witness to the world, we may frequently halt in the process of building a new meetinghouse, we may not be able to fill our roster of jobs, and we certainly won't get any prizes for attendance at Meeting for Business. But we have worship that is full of expectancy, tolerance, and sometimes, awe. To quote our minute, *The sense of being gathered as a worshipping community is with us from time to time - nourishing, connecting and deepening us individually and collectively. The balance of worship-filled sharing, silent as well as vocal, reflected the range of natural human concern, feeling, thinking, respectful listening and spiritual sensibility. We feel blessed in our Meetings for Worship.*

It has been a challenging year in Celo. In the fall, we held a special called Meeting for Community in response to a number of widely-felt concerns. Peace and Social Concerns had been laid down, we had no recording clerk, and the sparkplug of our building committee, financial bulwark and key person in the communications glue of our meeting community had moved away, with nobody stepping up to take on any of the functions we had habitually accepted from her. At the called meeting, which was well-attended, a cry also went up for more attention to the children, and to supporting their parents, who were carrying the First Day School load virtually alone. As the minutes record, the clerk *asked us to be open to what the Spirit asks of us and to give consideration to what we want from our Meeting and whether we can find unity between those things.* At the end, the other clerk said, "We have just witnessed a Quaker version of a Church Revival," and we sang in lusty assent.

The Spirit responded by continuing to welcome us into gathered meetings. We embraced the Strawberry Creek process of discernment for nominating with great success. And we raised enough money in our sixth annual appeal to fund the next, likely the penultimate, phase in construction on the new Meetinghouse. This spring we had a solid workday setting the foundation for the next phase of work. We await that next phase, but it is still not clear who will step into the shoes of the Friend who relished the job of driving the project forward with every atom of her being. Instead, we have contracting by committee. We have struggled to reconstitute Peace and Social Concerns, but there is yet no clear direction nor weight of attendance established.

We lost an old-time, well-seasoned civil rights activist after a long illness and had a beautiful memorial service led by her adopted children and grandchildren. One of us has battled cancer, and we have held two laying-on-hands Meetings for Healing to support her. In the fall we hosted a couples' retreat facilitated by experienced Friends from the Triangle (NC). The group continued to meet on its own for several months after the retreat, especially to hold up one couple who realized through the enrichment process that they had some difficult work to do.

Celo continues to have many children in attendance, with 12-15 each First Day. The younger children (4-7) have been studying the "Virtues Project," choosing a particular virtue each week as a tool for transformation. *Children and their parents no longer need to use blanket statements like "I'm having a bad day."*

*Instead, "I'm having a hard time practicing detachment.." Children eight and up have studied Queries for Quaker Children, studying the structure of the Meeting, and conducting Children's Meeting. This group has hosted "community spotlight," where the children invite in an adult to learn of their work and struggles to make the world a better place. (The first person they invited is not an attender of the Meeting. We hope he comes back!) This group has also been active in fund-raising for charities, which they learn about from adults in the Meeting. *We have made a "soul-shall" calendar that includes events both fun and meaningful. As one future event, we would like to connect with wider young Friends in WNC.**

Adult education has been revitalized this year, with frequent opportunities for worship sharing growing out of textual study and queries. This included a deeply meaningful four-week study of the Gospel of Thomas this spring.

At the request of a Friend who contributes regularly to vocal ministry, Ministry and Care appointed an elder, causing us to wrestle with broader questions surrounding the process of eldering, both in that committee and in Meeting for Business. The key question articulated in this process is this: *Is there a structure or spirit within which the process of eldering could be experienced as cooperative discernment rather than critical oversight?* We hope to have more to report in this vital area in next year's letter.

Respectfully submitted for Celo Meeting,
Bob McGahey, Co-Clerk
(approved May 21, 2006)

State of the Meeting 2006 Charleston, WV

This year Charleston Friends Meeting was blessed with new Friends arriving and old Friends returning. Because our group is small, we rejoice whenever someone new joins our fellowship, and we are sad whenever anyone leaves. We have had Friendly visitation with another nearby meeting and a growing worship group. We have also had visitors who felt uncomfortable with unprogrammed worship who have subsequently sought a faith community which was more structured or Bible-centered.

Most First Days we hold Meeting for Worship in space rented from a community development organization, which helps provide affordable housing to inner city residents and promote neighborhood revitalization. We hope our small contribution to the organization helps further its valuable mission.

Perhaps as a consequence of the inclusion of a set-aside time at the end of meeting for worship for sharing joys and concerns, or possibly because of our occasional worship sharing sessions, vocal ministry has increased both in the number of messages and the diversity of sources. The Spirit moves both in our silent worship and through the gift of ministry, and we are grateful.

Meeting continues to support the American Friends Service Committee-sponsored West Virginia Economic Justice Project and NEW Plus Project through its Peace and Social Concerns Committee. We were fortunate to be able to visit with the new AFSC regional director who visited Charleston shortly after his appointment. We are encouraged by his commitment to social justice and better management of the organization.

As in years past, we served a holiday breakfast for mothers and children in a local women's shelter and prepared dinner for men's shelter residents on Super Bowl Sunday. On Martin Luther King Day several Friends visited the West Virginia Legislature asking for an increase in the state minimum wage. We also remain active with local peace and interfaith organizations, lobbying and monitoring state and national legislation.

Adult discussions have focused on two areas: the occasional referral for discussion from SAYMA, and the study guide *Bringing Religious Education Home*. Because of our distance from the yearly meeting, opportunities to reflect on concerns and issues sent from the larger body provide an important way of staying in touch, which we appreciate. By considering SAYMA's *Faith and Practice* as well as historical Quaker writings included in our study guide, we are deepening our understanding of Quaker religious thought and practice.

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

Charleston Friends are planning the 2006 West Virginia Fall Gathering of Friends. In previous years, this has been held at camps at some distance from our homes. This year, we are planning the event in or near Charleston, most likely the weekend of September 16. Of course, SAYMA Friends are invited.

As we write this letter, we are saddened by news from Iraq of the death of Christian Peacemaker and Friend Tom Fox. We recognize that Tom's fate is no different from that of the hundreds of Iraqis who have died as a result of violence. We pray for a return of U.S. troops home and an end to sectarian strife in Iraq.

Chattanooga Friends Meeting

Our weekly meetings for worship continue to be a source of spiritual nourishment for Chattanooga Friends. The meeting still contributes to the Interfaith Hospitality Network, a local network of churches that helps homeless families. The children in our First Day School have produced and performed a puppet show called "Big Mouth Quakers." A women's quarterly potluck has been formed which has answered a need of the women. Members of the meeting have been busy in their own lives with all the activities that are important to making life happen. The meeting itself has been relatively quiet, but we have grown inwardly as we have been given the opportunity.

For several months, we dealt with resident issues. After 3 or 4 burglaries, the resident moved out and we installed a burglar alarm. Then a new resident moved into the house. For the next several months, we dealt with late or no rent and broken resident rules until we had to ask him to leave. These events, including whether to get the burglar alarm, required us to determine how to deal with what was going on and to do it in a Friendly way. These issues dealt with our testimony of integrity and community.

We have also created a website, <http://www.chattanoogafriends.org>, on which we have some pictures of the meeting house, directions to the house, a brief history of Chattanooga Friends, and the newsletter. Because our newsletter deals with our financial information and some personal information, we wondered whether we should make it password protected. After a month or two of having it protected by password, we united in not using one. Again this issue allowed us to consider our testimonies of integrity as well as simplicity.

Like many around the country, we have been uncertain as to what to do about our country's involvement in others' affairs, namely the war in Iraq. Some of us participated in the August peace march at the Oak Ridge nuclear bomb plant and some marched in March for peace and against our involvement in Iraq. Letters have been written individually. As one might imagine, we are still upset yet uncertain about what to do. We have created a Peace Committee in part as a response.

Each month we have a Bible study. We have been reading the book of Luke for over a year now. For those who participate, it has been an important and valuable discussion. We try to focus on what the Bible has to say to us as Quakers. It has proven to be a rewarding experience.

There is still much for us to do,
Yours in Peace,
Chattanooga Friends Meeting

Approved 6th Month, 2006

Columbia Friends Meeting State of the Meeting

Participation of young Friends has been central to the state of the meeting. A graduating high school senior has played a key role in our Ministry and Nurture Committee. Young Friends have led weighty discussions on spiritual issues each month as a program in our second hour of worship. They played a key role in the planning and programming at the Palmetto Friend's Gathering. They have also involved themselves in relating to our larger community through helping in community gardening, collecting aid as a part of the souper bowl, and helping a local nonprofit prepare books for libraries in Central America. Columbia Friends are indeed blessed by our Young Friends.

The other significant event of the past year has been the meeting receiving a grant from the American Friends Service Committee to work with Rural Southern Voice for Peace on the Gulf Coast Listening Project. The listening project is truly a Quakerly response to difficulties created by Hurricane Katrina. Many in the meeting are actively involved in the project.

We continue to provide nurturance for ailing parents and one devoted Friend continues to work with her son injured in a bicycle accident in Texas.

Although we transferred memberships of two former Clerks the meeting has gained a number of new attenders including a group of foreign national students from Colombia . Attendance each First Day continues to be around thirty.

State of the Meeting Report **Cookeville Preparative Meeting** June 2006

Spirit is alive and well in Cookeville Preparative Meeting. In reflecting on our past year together we have affirmed our trust and support of each other and of the Spirit. We realize that our hour of worship increases in possibility as we prepare ourselves during the week, and, if we are not always ready and open to the Light, we at least deepen our connection to each other in sharing the silence each First day.

We grew in trust as we held our first of many nominating committee meetings as a whole, following the Strawberry Creek Meeting process, and feel that we made some real progress in affirming and utilizing our individual and corporate gifts.

We took a large risk and leap of faith in hosting Peterson Toscano, a gay Quaker performance activist to come here to our conservative little town and perform his "Doing Time in the Ho Mo No Mo Halfway House". We were blessed with an incredible experience of "way opening". We received many messages of support, and financial assistance, which helped to make the event possible. The performance was amazing and the full venue hosted a diverse crowd. It was a great beginning for what we hope will be a continued interfaith dialog on Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans- Gender, and Queer issues.

Our witness in the local high school against military recruitment continues and is being supported by many others. Some of this same type of work in other area schools is already happening, and more is being planned for the future. A discussion group after school hours was formed with some of the teens who wanted more time to discuss issues important to them. It began with a local man telling about his recent experiences in Iraq, and has continued with discussions about civil disobedience, the difference between killing and murder, and two veterans telling about their different perspectives on war. The group has now become mostly adults, but is still going strong.

Our website is proving to be a good outreach tool, and has brought us a few visitors. Second hour discussions are still an important part of our Meeting , and we look forward to more of our life in the Spirit together in the coming year.

Crossville Monthly Meeting

184 Hood Dr.
Crossville, TN 38555

State of the Meeting Report

Things have been pretty slow and steady for the Meeting during the past year. As the majority of our members are in their 80's, the activity level has declined. We have been meeting at our Clerk Gladys Draudt's home in Pleasant Hill, since many can no longer drive to the Meetinghouse. We welcomed one new member, Jerri Bentley last summer, our first new member in many years. Margaret Haun also was a regular attender for a while before joining Birmingham Monthly Meeting. Dennis Gregg, who was the Principal of Obed Headwaters School, laid down the School in December of 2005, so the Meetinghouse is less used than before. A UCC church continues to use it on Sunday afternoons. Dennis is planning to offer a mid-week Meeting at the Meetinghouse as a way to accommodate new interest and some folks who wish to explore Quakerism further.

We have continued the practice of using Friends Journal for discussion one First Day a month, and have also been working our way through Quakerism 101 one Sunday a month as well. Despite our age and experience with Quakerism, it is remarkable how each time we do Quakerism 101, we discover something new.

Gwinnett Friends Preparative Meeting

of the
Religious Society of Friends

State of the Meeting, Spring 2006

1st Sixth Month, 2006

Gwinnett Friends Preparative Meeting has asked itself "How does the Spirit of the Lord prosper among us?" We have seen growth in this our first year as a Preparative Meeting. The sudden and rapid growth seems to have given way to a more steady maintenance of numbers regularly attending meeting for worship. We are not sure how to interpret this present "plateau" of attenders, given the natural flowing in and out of seekers and the regular attendance of seasoned Friends here. Perhaps we are not to interpret this as a discouragement but rather a more natural phenomenon.

It is our sense that meetings for worship are gathered in the Spirit and that a common bond of unity is developing among us, as we witness the power of God to unite many of varying interpretations and stages of faith among us. As a new Meeting, we seek better ways to express our unique functioning as Christians in our world, seeking to be doers of the Word and not only hearers of the Word. Our meetings for business, though lengthy, have led to unity and purpose on various issues that we have faced, including the establishment of funds, the expenditure of such funds for facilities, and the appointments of Clerk, Recording Clerk, and a Care and Council Committee.

We have welcomed traveling ministers from Ohio Yearly Meeting Conservative and North Carolina Yearly Meeting Conservative whose unique and meaningful witness of Quakerism was evident among us, and we were especially pleased to have the SAYMA Ministry and Worship Committee here in Fifth Month of 2006 to share with our Meeting.

Submitted by
Scott King, Clerk
Gwinnett Preparative Meeting
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Memphis Friends Meeting State of the Meeting 2006

Memphis Friends Meeting was delighted this past spring when our clerk, Robert Pugh, discovered minutes from a much earlier meeting in Memphis hidden away in the archives at Swarthmore College. We had heard rumors about a meeting here in the 50s, but this was our first positive confirmation. That first meeting affiliated with Friends World Committee in 1956, since Southern Appalachian Yearly Meeting and Association had not yet been founded, and continued until 1967, when it was laid down. However, just a few years later, another worship group formed with some of the same participants, until it too was laid down in 1982. Then in 1985 our current meeting was established as a worship group under the care of Nashville Friends and affiliated with SAYMA in 1988. An unexpected history of over 50 years is a wonderful thing to discover!

Interestingly, the earliest meeting struggled with some of the same challenges that still engage us. Here is a glimpse of what their recording clerk, Paul Coppock, had to say:

“Passing months brought subtractions and additions... If diversity was strength then the Memphis Meeting would be unusually strong. We have a few representatives of families with many generations of Quakers and several convinced Friends... Some have lived in the South many years and others are newly arrived from other climates... Sometimes the differences seem too much for such a small vessel to contain... the Memphis Meeting is especially influenced by incoming and outgoing college and university teachers. The even tenure of farm families in rural meetings... is unknown to this group.

When we look back at our own meeting, we find that over 100 people have arrived and left again since 1985. If only all of those people were still with us! But they are not and the number of names on our mailing list as well as the numbers of worshipers on First Day morning actually stays about the same although names and faces change: at any one time we can count roughly 45 names and anywhere from a dozen to 35 worshipers. We are going through an active period for visitors, probably because of the continuing occupation of Iraq, but at the same time the number of people available to carry on the work of the meeting seems to be shrinking. Part of that is for a very good reason: many of our stalwarts have become very active in SAYMA.

Nevertheless we feel well established here in Memphis. We have been in our current meeting house since 1995. We are renters, but we have a good location in a restaurant district in Midtown with another inclusive peace church just down the street: First Congregational. Every day passersby see our sign announcing Quaker Worship and a sign in the window keeps them up to date on the cost of the war in Iraq. We have a new website at www.MemphisFriends.org and publish our newsletter without fail every month. It is through these two efforts that many members and attenders are introduced to the wider Quaker world beyond Memphis.

Sometimes the wider Quaker world comes to us. Jim and Ginger Kinney, the Midwest Regional Directors for FCNL, visited with us in April. We helped out when AFSC's Eyes Wide Open Exhibit came to Memphis again in March at the invitation of the Memphis Peace & Justice Center. And last January we hosted FGC Traveling Ministries. They helped us think about being more welcoming to visitors. We've begun to brew coffee to share after meeting. That and the cookies keeps people here long enough to chat a bit.

We've tried a few other innovations this year too. After a very peaceful Christmas Eve worship, we decided to hold a candlelight worship service the second Wednesday each month. These proved so pleasant to the small handful of participants, that they have been continued indefinitely. A small study group on prayer has met on Sunday evenings for several weeks this past spring. And at the encouragement of our young friends we collected material and made a Memphis Friends quilt to wrap around our new young friends as a welcome to the Meeting.

Last fall our peace fund got quite a work out. We had established it some years ago as a way to raise money above and beyond our budget to help out with current needs. We sent money both to AFSC and to the Oxford (Mississippi) Interfaith Compassion Ministries for hurricane relief for the Gulf Coast and to Mercy Corps for earthquake relief in the Kashmir. We have exercised our legs and lungs for peace as well as our pocketbooks: a sizeable contingent of Friends participated in a peace march sponsored by the Peace & Justice Center on March 19 and one of our members has joined a weekly peace vigil each Wednesday morning.

This past year we developed and seasoned two important minutes which we have been sharing with the world: one decrying American use of torture in the war on terror and another on how our equality testimony speaks to current discrimination against gays and lesbians. We have found that the process of thinking clearly which minutes necessitate helps us see our way forward on issues like these. While we have been focusing on our relationship with the wider world – how to tap into resources beyond our own meeting and how to witness for peace and social concerns in a way that gets attention – this very outward focus, paradoxically, is deepening our sense of community within the meeting. Memphis Meeting is faring well.

Nashville Monthly Meeting

State of the Meeting Report

After almost three years in our “new” meetinghouse the sense of the Spirit is as strong as when we first saw it. Not only is it still present, but it deepens as increasing numbers of visitors stay to become attenders and members. In an effort to be more open about our ways, Ministry and Counsel developed a brochure that answers common questions about participation in worship and the life of the meeting. Committee life of the meeting is ever enriched by the gifts and service of these new attenders and members. Our monthly pot luck meals offer a wide array of delicious foods despite our not yet having a fully operational kitchen. Dishwashing in the huge blue bins has become a rich intergenerational event punctuated by song and laughter.

We have had a greater than usual call upon our pastoral care resources with several clearness committees for life situations; ongoing support committees for various concerns such as spiritual leadings and ill health. We have found that the continuing care committees often serve as a spiritual nurture group for the whole committee, broadening their activities to include shared meals and study, all the while providing the loving care for each other that our meeting does so well. We have already realized several fruits of our two year journey with Penelope Wright as she participated in the School of the Spirit for Spiritual Nurturers program. Her Care and Accountability Committee shared with us the minute of completion she received at the last session in May. They report that all on the committee and Penelope have benefited from the shared experience in personal and spiritual ways. Her committee looks forward to assisting her in sharing her papers and poetry with more of the meeting.

We were honored to be able to host our first marriage in October. Although it was not under our care, rather St. Louis monthly meeting, we worked jointly with the couple to meet their plans for the ceremony and served light refreshments during the certificate signing. On May 28th we celebrated the marriage of members Donald (Turtle) Kientz and Deanna Nipp. under the care of our meeting. The wedding was held during regularly scheduled meeting for worship and was followed by a simple celebration in the meeting house.

For the fifth year, Nashville hosted a Regional Gathering of Friends, inviting all Friends from the western area of our yearly meeting. Young Friends (teens and young adults) were specifically invited this year, and we all felt the power of their presence as we addressed our theme: *Realizing a Quaker Testimony on Age: How Friends can name gifts, empower prophetic voice and nurture vital intergenerational relationships*. Zachary Moon and his spiritual companion Sid Kitchens faithfully led us in this intergenerational theme as we engaged in role playing Old Testament stories pertinent to the theme. Later we gathered in worship sharing around nurturing and naming gifts of Friends of ALL ages. We give thanks to the Traveling Ministries Program of Friends General Conference for helping us discern who might lead our gathering; for providing financial support and holding us all in prayer.

Shortly after the kidnapping of the Christian Peace Team workers in Iraq we held an interfaith vigil attended by fellow peace travelers. Denominations melted as we held those faithful peace ministers in prayer and prayed for peace in Iraq. Four months later we gathered again to worship in memory of Tom. We were blessed by words from several, including one of the Muslim imams and found ourselves once again in unity around our desire for peace in that part of the world.

Later that same week we held another meeting for memorial. Although there had been a memorial meeting in Pennsylvania for our beloved founding member, Nelson Fuson, our meeting, the Fuson family and the Fisk University community felt there needed to be another one in Nashville. Held on the Fisk campus, the worship was attended by many who spoke of the variety of ways their lives had been touched by both Nelson and Marian during their long and faithful life in the Spirit here in Nashville.

With great joy we have noticed the large increase of young Friends of all ages. New babies join the toddlers in preschool class. A core of upper elementary students has been learning about Bible stories and Quaker practice. The biggest increase has been in our teen class. Most of them participate as regularly as possible in First Day school. A highlight of this participation for the rest of us was a second hour performance of a self-directed play about the trial of William Penn and William Mead. Their community is not restricted to First Day School, as they extended hospitality to a visiting group of students from Scattergood School and the Arthur Morgan School. Many of our teens have become part of the Southern Appalachian Young Friends (SAYF) community, along with a strong and committed group of adults who serve as Friendly Drivers and Friendly Adult Presences. The teens who attended the Regional Gathering expressed how powerfully the SAYF experience has augmented their understanding of Quakerism and Quaker practice. To our great delight and due to strong

labor on the part of some of our carpentry-skilled members, the downstairs toilets and showers were ready for us when we hosted the first ever SAYF retreat in Nashville this April. During one of the teen First Day classes (and later at Meeting second hour) a representative of Tennessee Committee to Abolish State Killing (TCASK) spoke to us about that organization's work, which we support as a member body. The teens also noted that this was a key experience for them this year.

Several of our adult members have provided a most amazing quality of religious education based on Quaker fundamentals and faith and practice drawn from across the spectrum of Friends. We supported a rising clerk of the meeting in attending a clerking workshop at Pendle Hill and several Friends have been sponsored to other Friendly workshops. Already we have received benefits and blessings from that support.

Continuing the previous year's work with the Alternatives to Violence Program (AVP) we have completed two training groups and are now sponsoring training for trainers. We anticipate that our participation in this program and training will be of service locally and regionally.

The meeting's outreach activities have been focused in the immediate neighborhood of the meetinghouse. We joined an interfaith group in a neighborhood cleanup resulted in the collection of hundreds of old tires and tons of trash. A community gardening project is supported by the meeting (among others), and 50 tomato buckets were assembled and delivered to various neighbors for free as an inducement to attend a monthly neighborhood meeting. We have also participated in a neighborhood group that has purchased six vacant lots through Metro Nashville housing grant money.

That unspeakable topic for Friends, money and finances, has come out from under the rug as we continue to plan for meeting our debts incurred with the purchase and renovations of the meetinghouse and our fiscal needs for our increasing programs. Our Finance Committee led us through careful discernment around our budget for 2006. After two months consideration we approved a budget approximately 10% larger ever before. Included in this increase was a deeply discerned decision to set a description of an "active" member so that we could fully meet our yearly meeting assessment.

Approved at a called meeting, Fourth Day, Sixth Month 2006

New Moon Worship Group **State of the Meeting**

We have five faithful and regular attenders who also happen to be recorded members of Beacon Hill Friends Meeting, Swannanoa Valley Friends Meeting and Celo Friends Meeting.

We are visited by others from Celo and Asheville Friends Meetings and by people from Barnardsville and the nearby communities of Mars Hill and Weaverville. We often have seven to ten worshippers at our meetings.

This year, we established a caring relationship with Celo Meeting after inviting both Swannanoa Valley and Celo Friends Meetings to explore this opportunity themselves.

Celo meeting has made the commitment to send visitors at least quarterly. Their support and presence has blessed our worship.

As a group, we have labored over the Faith and Practice revisions and have responded to Friends Committee on National Legislation's request for setting priorities.

We now have established the first First Day of each month as our meeting time. We meet on other First Days as we can. We meet at 5:15 pm at the Barnardsville United Methodist Church.

Respectfully submitted,
Susan Carlyle
May 2006

Swannanoa Valley Friends Meeting 2006

The spiritual and financial health of our Meeting is good. We are active and growing, having an average weekly attendance of 32-35 persons, including a welcome influx of Warren Wilson College students. We have accepted two new members and two transfers into our Meeting, and other applications for membership are in process. Our First Day School serves 2-5 children on a regular basis, with one regular teacher and several volunteers.

Our Spiritual Life Committee has redefined our committee structure, has continued to sponsor Care Circles, and has written new guidelines for membership. We have attempted to be more attentive to a growing number of visitors. We have been busy helping to move two of our members from independent living at Highland Farms into assisted living, and have also given support to another elderly Friend in her decision to go to Foulkeways at Gwynned in Pennsylvania, although we greatly miss her presence with us.

In the area of Peace and Social Concerns we help with the clothing needs of young men at the local Youth Development and Detention Center as well as supporting the work of the Swannanoa Valley Christian Ministry, which helps with basic needs of people in our valley. We continue to support the personal ministry of individual members and attenders, whether it be the building of schools in rural Guatemala, peacemaking in Palestine, tutoring projects, or supporting the programs offered by our members Beth and Mel Keiser in areas of peacemaking, spiritual growth and racial justice at Common Light Meetingplace.

With respect to our facilities, our year has been divided into two parts. During the first half of the year we managed the sale of the property we owned on Old Highway 70 in Swannanoa. During the second half of the year we have begun in a deliberate manner to develop proposals of how that Meeting can continue its tenure at Common Light Meetingplace, exploring both rental and purchase options with its owners Beth and Mel Keiser. During the coming months the major issue facing our Meeting will be whether we will continue to rent Common Light or raise the funds to purchase it. We are looking for guidance as we undertake this deliberation and ask for the prayers of SAYMA Friends.

Tony Bing, Clerk

West Knoxville Monthly Meeting State of the Meeting Report – 2006

Our spiritual journey this year has been one marked by celebration and a powerful sense of community. We have celebrated together the birth of a beautiful child into our meeting community, and we have celebrated together the life of one of our most beloved members who died on May 20 after three years of courageous living with breast cancer. Our spiritual community has been strengthened by our sharing of the joys and wonderment of birth and developing life and by our communal involvement in the joys and struggles of the passing of life and the transitions we make as a spiritual community. We have joined together in Spirit for a memorial service of remembrance and celebration, and we have joined together to celebrate the graduations of a number of our Young Friends from high school and college. Joining together in these transitions and celebrations 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 or emotional struggles. A number of Friends have been participating in physical and spiritual healing sessions with members of our Meeting who have been undergoing personal struggles. 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 one for our Meeting in terms of exploring our spiritual beliefs and seeking to know through the Spirit more about Quaker faith and practices. Through the work of the Religious Education Committee and the Ministry and Nurture Committee we have been experimenting with changes in our approach to Meeting for Worship. These changes attempt to involve adult and young Friends more fully in our worship community and to allow all of us to become more centered as we worship together. We have continued to participate in sessions and discussions seeking to explore our spiritual journeys and beliefs together. In addition, we have been planning a retreat weekend for our Meeting 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. We have supported efforts to establish a Peace Center at our Meeting and are excited about learning more from San Francisco Friends about their Peace Center from a member of our Meeting who is traveling to San Francisco this summer and who will be helping us as we seek to develop a Peace Center at West Knoxville. We 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. 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 Meeting for Healing. We have opened the Meeting House to various traveling groups and local organizations and activists and have enjoyed 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 our faith and practices. We also have entered into a deeper consideration of 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.