

Southeastern Yearly Meeting

of the Religious Society of Friends

Spiritual State of the Meeting Reports

for the calendar year

2017

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

---SEYM Faith & Practice, p. 76

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Clearwater Friends Meeting 2017 Spiritual State of the Meeting Report

The one word that characterizes our collective journey during 2017 is change. We have been blessed by the attendance of new Friends who are wintering in Florida, the transfer of a Friend from the Portland Friends Meeting in Maine, the arrival of a family from Massachusetts which included two school-age girls, and the participation of other new attenders. The addition of our young Friends has resulted in the development of a First Day school which, in turn, required moving our meeting to a new location that would provide adequate space.

Again this year, Friends have experienced a wide range of life challenges including the loss of loved-ones and numerous health issues. Through all of this, we support one another in practical ways as well as emotionally and spiritually. Unfortunately, many of our members are separated by significant geographical distance which makes it difficult to offer physical support. However, we maintain regular contact through our weekly meetings for worship, emails, phone calls and greeting cards. Friends regularly acknowledge the strength they receive from knowing that they are being held in the Light.

Our efforts to reach beyond our meeting take a variety of forms. Several of our members serve in various SEYM positions. Our Peace and Social Concerns Committee has been actively involved in the development of an FCNL advocacy team that has met several times with US congressional representatives for Pinellas and Pasco counties. In addition, members and attenders are individually engaged in a wide range of activities to enhance the communities in which we live.

Our annual budget includes contributions to several national Quaker organizations and local agencies serving disadvantaged members of our community. In response to the destructive hurricane season last year, we sent financial aid to victims in Texas, central Florida and Puerto Rico. Our desire to support worthy causes contributes to an ongoing discussion about what constitutes maintaining appropriate financial reserves versus freely dispersing these funds to various organizations engaged in ecological or social issues.

Both individually and collectively we seek to live in ways that reflect our understanding of the inner Light. This requires a continual reconsideration of what we are doing and what we may feel led to do in the future. One area we currently recognize as needing improvement is our connection with the local faith community. In February 2017, we participated in the Faith Peace walk organized by an interfaith coalition of congregations in the Dunedin area. We plan to attend this activity again this year and seek other opportunities to expand our involvement with the religious community.

Fort Myers Monthly Meeting Spiritual State of the Meeting

Meeting for Worship remains our spiritual home where we find a balance, often a healing one, between our outer and inner lives. Through the process of silent waiting and in the messages given in spoken ministries, we may gain spiritual direction and awareness. Without judgment and allowing for silent time between messages, we can remain open to leadings and to Truth that speaks to us through Friends' messages. Individually we may feel strengthened and deepened by Spirit-led messages. As a community, we may be gathered as one in the Light. Several members have said they have felt one or another of our meetings for worship to be gathered/covered, a testimony to the love and Light in our Meeting and to the blessing of a variety of voices in our spoken ministries.

Beyond the time of First Day Meetings, we encourage Friends to strengthen their spiritual lives through adult education under the active guidance of a committee, through prayer groups meeting between First Days, and through small spiritual formation groups. The hope is that these practices, in addition to the ministries spoken in Meeting, will be guides for our members and attenders to carry on a Spirit-filled life in their secular ones. In addition, with new attenders coming in, we have set into motion a Quakerism 101 course. And, in the spirit of fellowship, several social gatherings such as Thanksgiving and Christmas pot luck dinners are becoming a tradition.

We try to be aware of and minister to those in our community who struggle to find peace in this currently very chaotic world. We affirm the pain and feelings of helplessness of Friends for the sufferings in the world – ethnic wars, refugee crises, nuclear threats – that seem to lie beyond our individual scope to change. As an aging community, we also must be tender to the feelings of loss we face. This year we witnessed the loss of four beloved members of our Meeting family: the death of Phyllis Stanley, a founding member; the death of Susan Curra, long term winter resident from the Vasselboro (ME) Meeting; the move of Tom Dudley and Nancy Fennell, long time members and weighty Friends, to move closer to family. The loss of these Friends created a great void in our hearts and in the life of the Meeting. In addition, a number of our Quaker family continue to be burdened with mental, emotional and physical health issues which need our support and understanding.

This year we were happy to welcome into membership a convinced Friend and to accept the transfer of three more from other Yearly Meetings. We believe this speaks to the strength of our Meeting as a welcoming group for those seeking a community of worship. At the same time, one member gave up membership to become a part of another faith community. While we honor that spiritual searching will take people in many wonderful directions, this loss is a humble reminder that we sometimes fail those we care about and need to be more mindful of individual's personal needs and concerns as they make their spiritual journey among us.

We continue to seek the presence of God outside the Meeting and to share the Light and love of our Meeting with others beyond our walls. We have reached out to one specific family, not of our Meeting, who has come personally to ask our help in times of crisis. Friends bring food weekly to be given to a local food bank. We support one member's new leading to work with conscientious objectors. Other members announce letter and petition writing opportunities that address various social issues. We are committed to both our outreach program and to the work of our Peace and Social Concerns committee. We are especially grateful for the tireless work of Peace and Social Concerns as participants with the Lee Interfaith for Empowerment (LIFE) to make changes for social justice in the county. As a small community, our committees often have small numbers and overlapping members. We hope that, through our Outreach Committee, our presence in the community will invite more people to join us and support our efforts.

Last year's spiritual state of the Meeting mentioned that the Meeting missed having children and a wider distribution of ages in attendance in Meeting. That has delightfully shifted this year with the regular attendance of a few mothers and their young children. Their presence also reminds us that in our current place of worship we no longer have access to a space to serve as a First Day school or a nursery. We wait on the Light to show us a way, grateful for the new voices among us.

Approved 2nd month 11th day, 2018

Fort Lauderdale Friends Meeting State of the Meeting Report for 2017

Fort Lauderdale Friends Meeting continues as a small meeting whose regular attenders know each other well. We continue to find that the life of our Meeting enriches our personal lives.

We often remember Herving Madruga, who died in early 2017, after an extended decline in health. We have welcomed the participation of new attenders who enrich the life of our community.

From her new home in North Carolina, Mary Jo Klingel continues to be active in the leadership of Quaker Earthcare Witness. Locally, we are mindful of supporting QEW, supporting SEYM's Earthcare initiatives.

Brian Humphrey has offered workshops on nonviolent strategies for conflict resolution. When doing so, he has listed Quaker contributions to conflict resolution work.

We have continued to organize a Tri-County Quaker Picnic for Friends from the Fort Lauderdale, Miami, and Palm Beach meetings. Picnic events include a Meeting for Worship, a picnic lunch, and an after-lunch discussion session about a concern of current interest.

In 2017, we discussed ways that we might form alliances with ethnic communities and religious minorities to weather the current political climate. We shared information from the wider Quaker community and news about local efforts; and we considered ways to actively support people who may be viewed as "the other."

Gainesville Monthly Meeting Spiritual State of the Meeting 2018

As we reflect on the spiritual state of our Meeting, we find that there is much that fills us with joy and much that saddens our hearts. We have lost two long-time members to death this year and others to the ravages of increasing dementia. Illness and the burdens of care-taking seem to stalk some of our older Friends. At the same time we welcomed several new attenders and families with their energy and curiosity about our community and Quakers.

The heart and soul of the Meeting is our time spent together in worship. It is this coming together that binds us into a Beloved Community. After worship we typically gather to share a meal and frequently linger into the afternoon because we enjoy being together. Our conversations often go deep into our lives as Friends and how we choose to live as Quakers. These hours on Sunday serve to build a deep sense of community among us.

This time together has also helped us to understand how thinly the time and energy of many Friends is spread. We could not find anyone to take on the responsibilities of the clerk of the meeting; rather, we have a committee of clerks to share the responsibilities.

In early December 2017 we spent some time as a meeting looking at how we spend our resources and how we think we want to spend our resources. We found that there is an immediate hunger for more time to explore spiritual topics, a desire for tools to help to center in worship, a desire to explore contemporary Quaker thought and practice. We are working on addressing those over the short term through teaching centering practices, drawing on FGC's Spiritual Deepening Program and The Spiritual Formation Program for activities, readings, and discussion topics that meet the specific needs of our community. We also found that there is a need for us to examine our priorities in how we use our time. The highest priorities identified by Friends were Spiritual Growth, Community Building, and Social Action. We are working to plan a meeting retreat to determine how we can align our activities to best support those priorities.

Some members of our community have been actively building outreach skills, learning about publicity and advertising. We maintain a presence on Facebook and an up-to-date webpage. Our events are regularly listed in the local newspapers.

We have reached out into the community with a regular Monday night witness for justice for immigrants. Various members of the meeting have been active in preparing a space at a local church to receive undocumented immigrants into sanctuary. Others plan to be active in supporting individuals or a family once they have entered sanctuary. We provide space for the Steering Committee meeting of the local Indivisible group, as well as a space for letter-writing campaigns on issues that affect the community. We have hosted two Alternatives to Violence workshops, specifically inviting local groups that are active in protesting at the offices of members of congress. We sponsored an art event in May on the 'Art of Fearlessness' that drew several artists from the community.

Jacksonville Friends Meeting Spiritual State of the Meeting – 2017 Report

The following paraphrases and compiles testimony of four different Friends.

- Since January 2017 we've seen a welcome increase in visitors (27 in all), some passing through, some staying as new residents, and some of joining us as newcomers or as participants in outreach activities such as ICARE icarejax.org, Veterans for Peace www.veteransforpeace.org, and TakeEmDownJAX www.facebook.com/TakeEmDownJax. If nothing else, this means our websites and directional signs have made us easier to find.

On the other hand, our regular attendance has dwindled to 4-6 per week. A bit disappointing, since I'd love to worship with a larger group, but it doesn't trouble me. Jacksonville Meeting is a sort of "Quaker way station" for those who need to touch base, even if they are on their way elsewhere. The door is open, Friends and Seekers find us easily, and what needs to happen will happen.

- Numbers are not the issue. Our little meeting has a very big community footprint. We are known widely in Jacksonville for our deeds and actions. We grow from this. That public character of Quakers is what first attracted me, that readiness to take a stand.
- I am increasingly grateful for Meeting. One query stands out: "Do we leave our meetings filled with a sense of love and peace and courage to meet the challenge of Spirit filled living?" This has been a tumultuous year for the country and for the community. It has affected me very much personally. Meeting for worship does ground and center me. It's very helpful on the personal level as I deal with changes both in the world and in myself.
- In 2017 I was invited twice to Second Sundays at Stetson's in Beluthahatchee Park www.stetsonkennedy.com/second-sundays.html, the monthly musicians' gathering. Always standing room only in a space for 60 people—but no people of color, even though Stetson was greatly loved by them. My guess is that Black folks prefer to pull themselves up by their own bootstraps, rather than having "benevolent White folk" do it for them. This year I have more questions than answers.
- I am thankful to Meeting for the inward challenges and openings I have received this past year. Ministering to Friends in need has been very much my calling this year—but I have been gifted with leadings to help me move from "playing pastor" to allowing the simple organicity of being with Friends I visit.
- There is so much global change going on. Something is trying to be born. We need to listen well—especially to voices outside our comfort zones—to discern where the Spirit is taking us now. It's not business as usual. I think the changes in Meeting are part of these larger changes in ourselves and in our country.
- The previous Friend's words remind me of something I observed as an 18-year-old AFSC volunteer in Europe after World War II. Few of the volunteers were Quakers, but they were deep thinkers, trying to find themselves. They were practicing Quakers. I admire AFSC for sending people who were thoroughly dedicated to the work, ones who were not necessarily stuck in any philosophy, but who wished to get along and to consider all sides of a question.
- Here's what gives me hope. Those of us who were activists in the 60s-70s remember the "Crying Indian" ad that portrayed a Native American man devastated to see pollution and litter. Now, instead of just seeing ad images, people from all over the world have actually gone to Standing Rock to live with the native Waterkeepers waterkeeper.org—including vets from Vietnam, Iraq, and Afghanistan who went to protect the people from violence.

---Submitted by Mike Shell, Clerk 1/29/2018

The Quaker Meeting of Melbourne State of the Meeting 2017

The Quaker Meeting of Melbourne has continued to meet for weekly worship in the Coffee House at the Friendship Fellowship at Pineda, a Unitarian Church. Our worship and connections with a wider Quaker community are greatly enriched by visitors from our community and from other parts of the world. We greet with joy new members; this year our Friend Jack Soldano joined our membership after several years of faithful attendance. In 2017 several individuals in our meeting suffered great challenges, and the Meeting united to support them. We continue to meet monthly at a member's home for potluck followed by enrichment/discussions on topics that are pressing on those attending. Informal discussions after the rise of meeting occur frequently and have helped us know each other better.

The steadfast strength and commitment of Don Garwood as our clerk have been vital ingredients in sustaining the spiritual and loving community of Melbourne's Friends for the last five years. Our community has deepened, enriched and broadened during his time as our clerk, and it was with sadness but understanding that we accepted his decision to step down as clerk. Don's willingness to help us through a transition as well as his continued active participation in meeting activities provides continuity and leadership. Because no one person was led to step into the clerk's role beginning in January 2018, we, the meeting, carefully examined what we believed to be essential responsibilities of the clerk and then divided them up amongst ourselves. We will continue to share corporately the responsibilities of clerk until someone is led to assume that role.

In 2017 Melbourne Meeting supported "Breathing Space," a group providing support for those reentering the community after having been incarcerated, as well as conservation efforts for the Indian River Lagoon. In 2017 Don Garwood continued his work under Prisoner Visitation and Support, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and his visitation at Coleman Federal Penitentiary; he reported back regularly to the Monthly Meeting. We continue to look for ways to make a difference in our community with our small meeting both individually and as a meeting as a whole.

Miami Friends Meeting 2017 Spiritual State of the Meeting report

Looking At Loss And Acting On Faith

Each year we are called upon by the Yearly Meeting to examine our local Meeting and evaluate its spiritual well-being. That often has meant noting who is no longer with us and who has found us, and what events

We have noted a number of losses during the past year with the passing of longtime member John Stevens and Bob Ginsburg, and attender Myrtle Burke, and the departure of the Merleaux and Dower-Castañeda families. We have also noted that with the decrease in numbers there has been an increased unity among those who remain and a keener awareness of the need to be sensitive and caring to those who are still here and the visitors who come to share our worship.

We have reinforced our relationship with the AFSC as they mark their 100th anniversary. We support their work in the immigrant community and offer guest space in Bartram House and use of the Meetinghouse for some of their events. The Meeting has an ongoing commitment to engagement with earth care and a financial commitment to green investments. Our physical plant is in constant use by the wider community and support groups.

Nominating Committee has been under pressure to recruit people to help, and to find imaginative ways to meet our communities needs. We realize that our Meeting's health is tied to the participation of all. We are examining our flexibility, our ability to find more solutions with fewer hands. Committees with fewer members are being supplemented by volunteers and our First Day School responsibilities are now addressed on an ad hoc basis.

Our Outreach committee is working with the Worship and Ministry committee to raise the Meeting's profile online so that searchers may find us more easily.

But our spiritual well-being is not just a question of numbers. The challenge of fewer people at worship — now closer to twenty each week than the forty who were here a few years ago — has made us more sensitive and responsive to visitors' needs even as we care for friends of many years.

— Miami Friends Meeting State of the Meeting Report, February 2018

Orlando Monthly Meeting Spiritual State of the Meeting 2017

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

We try to support each other through listening and being present for each other---as best we can---in all we do. Many Friends and Attenders find our informal weekly coffee hour after silent worship to be a place for emotional connection and listening where we can experience ministry by being present with one another in conversation. We support each other in our journeys even as we undertake committee work, by having 'check-ins,' listening to all points of view, and working as a team, with trust and humor.

We create various opportunities for connection and inclusion. The ministry of music before silent worship, where Friends have the opportunity to come together and sing from our Quaker hymnal, is a source of joy and connection. Bible study before worship is a ministry for our homeless attenders and early arrivals that has given substantial support to regular participants. Our Conversation to Explore after worship, with its worship sharing/creative listening format, is a safe space where all are included and listened to.

The weekly Quaker Notes e-newsletter serves as a way to disseminate information to those unable to attend worship as well as remind Friends of the happenings at OMM. Visitors who sign the guest book are contacted by phone to extend our welcome.

We do what we can to support Friends facing life changes or difficulties. Friends reaffirmed our policy to offer support for regular homeless attenders by paying for a one week stay at a shelter on a case-by-case basis. The Care & Community Committee provides listening, clearness, and other assistance to individuals. An Advocacy team visited the Orlando office of US Senator Marco Rubio on behalf of a regular attender and her family to discuss immigration and advocate for the extension of Temporary Protected Status (TPS) to immigrants from Haiti.

A Friend recently married under the care of the meeting shared that the clearness process for marriage was a source of tremendous support for both her and her wife. The clearness committee members demonstrated great tenderness with the couple who felt deeply anchored by their presence during the ceremony.

The death of OMM/SEYM elder Cathy Gaskill is deeply felt in our community. Though her presence her at worship and business meetings is sorely missed, her memorial service at John Knox Village was an opportunity for her neighbors, friends, and family to gather together with her beloved Quaker community to celebrate her life.

Query #10. *How does the spirit of worship extend into our committee work and into meeting for worship with a concern for business?*

As we take up Friends' practice intentionally-- approaching interactions with one another in a spirit-filled way, ministering, listening, being present to Spirit and each other in Worship and other activities --- our Meetings for Business have become more grounded in the Spirit. Clerk's readings at the beginning of Meeting for Worship for Business help us center down and be reminded of our practice. Her careful use of silence draws us back into worship when necessary.

As one Friend commented, "It is no longer remarkable that things are working well." Tasks that could have been contentious in Meeting for Business were worked through in a worshipful way. In January 2017 we finally sold Cisney House, and reached unity in providing the trustees a minute on how to invest the proceeds of the sale and other assets. The Michener Lecture was hosted by many able people coming together. Committees are functional and prepared for business meetings. The work of

committees is trusted when brought forward to business meetings, though this was not always the case in years past.

We can be supportive of each other and more of a witness in community is because we are remembering to do things with and in the spirit.

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

Orlando Meeting worked to connect and bring our witness to the wider community in a number of ways in 2017.

In terms of advocacy:

- Two Friends attended board meetings of the Orange County Library System in Summer 2017 to share our concern about the lack of access to computers and online resources by the homeless.
- A few Friends participated in an FCNL Advocacy Team training, and visited Senator Rubio's office, advocating for an extension of the Temporary Protected Status (TPS) for immigrants and a path for citizenship for these immigrants.
- A letter to the editor from Orlando Quakers, Congress Should Pass the Dream Act, was published by the Orlando Sentinel in December 2017.

We also connected with community groups in various ways:

- Friends attended the Annual MLK Memorial sponsored by City of Orlando and Interfaith Council of Central Florida. A group of Orlando Friends enjoyed food and fellowship with our Moslem neighbors on three different occasions at events hosted by the Islamic Society of Central Florida. A number of Friends attended an "Abolition 2020" event commemorating the lives lost at Hiroshima/Nagasaki and advocating for the abolition of Nuclear Weapons. Clerk represented Orlando Quakers at two community events sponsored by Interfaith Council of Central Florida
- Several outside community groups use the meetinghouse for their meetings, including Debtors Anonymous and the Citizens Climate Lobby.
- The installation of a new audiovisual system in 2017 allows us to virtually connect, as a group, to the wider Quaker world and to online events such as FCNL advocacy training. It will also allow us to host events for our local community and SEYM more easily.
- \$16,000 in grant money was donated to community groups in Central Florida, to disaster relief for refugees and Puerto Rico, and to Quaker-based aid organizations.
- A marriage under the care of the meeting provided a meaningful opportunity for 75 non-Quaker guests to experience a Quaker meetinghouse and worship for the first time.

Query #8. *Are there places where the meeting isn't reaching fully for the Light?*

We have improved, but feel that more open communication with one another is necessary. Sharing information after Meeting for Worship is helpful to those who do not attend business meetings.

We could reach out more intentionally members of the local LGBTQ+ community by publicly identifying ourselves as a safe space and welcoming community. Are there ways that OMM could partner with Zebra Coalition or The Center to provide shelter on cold nights given that many young LGBTQ+ people do not safe at homeless shelters? We could also be more involved in the interfaith community in Central Florida by hosting an event at OMM

While responsibilities are more widely shared than in the past, there is Concern that a greater share of the burdens is being carried by only a few people. For instance, even though many Friends have come forward to teach Young Friends Group, one person is still doing most of the work. If YFG is important to

us, more people could volunteer to work one Sunday with the kids. We need to look into our hearts to see if there's more that we can do.

OMM does well at offering financial support to those in need, but could do even better. We could use the financial legacy from our past to help in the present. Since we have the privilege of being a financially secure meeting, why couldn't we expand our annual grants program?

Query #6: *Where do we find hope in the meeting and in our spiritual life?*

Our meeting realizes how blessed we are, in so many ways.

The presence of several new attenders contributes to the meeting, adds to our perspectives, and represents hope and new liveliness. More than one newcomer has shared that they feel very welcomed at meeting, noting that attending worship has enriches not only their spiritual life, but their lives in general. We find hope in serving as a home for seekers who are looking for greater depth in their spiritual lives.

Our Orlando Quaker community has the rare gift of a group of people gathering each week to listen and discern what spirit is asking us to do. An attender shared that they rejoice at how passionately engaged Orlando Quakers are about everything we do, tenderly considering each and every item on our monthly business meeting agenda.

We find hope in the continued presence of a formerly homeless attender whom the meeting was able to support in obtaining permanent housing. He shared that his hopes would not be as high as they are today without OMM. He expressed gratitude for Friends cheering him up and reminded us that whenever two or more are gathered, there is love.

We find hope in the growth and continuing support of one Friend's traveling ministry, which, in 2017, included presenting at the FGC Gathering and several yearly meetings.

We find hope in now having a firmly established financial legacy, in that releases present and future Friends from the burden of having to work too hard for, or worry about, money. This gives us more time to devote to spiritual growth, community, and witness. Way has opened for a number of Orlando Friends to serve in various roles within Southeastern Yearly Meeting.

From time to time, Friends experience Meetings for Worship that are deeply gathered. We feel blessed to have this Quaker way of worship.

---compiled from responses from Friends in Conversation to Explore/worship sharing

Palm Beach Meeting 2017 State of Meeting Report

As 2017 draws to a close, we reflect on how the Spirit is doing in Palm Beach Meeting. We gratefully weathered Hurricane Irma without property damage but much debris.

Meeting celebrated the wedding of Javier del sol and Ketia Lartique under the care of the Meeting. In February we hosted a retreat on living in community with Jennifer Karston from Pendle Hill.

For the second year, we have scaled down committees and encouraged members & frequent attenders in their care for each other and property. Ministry Committee has reiterated that in these uncertain times we must be committed to provide a spiritually nurturing hour of worship, warm welcome to visitors, and heartfelt fellowship and hospitality at our weekly potluck. More people seem to finding our Meeting which given us hope for the future. This has a lot to do with our Web presence, Meet Up listings, and weekly emails. Weekly singing and A Course in Miracles continue, as do other groups using our space, including one advocating for tenants rights.

We strive to stay aware of local peace and social justice activities we can join and have recently established a meeting FCNL rep to connect with national work. We have joined with others in Lake Worth and established a Little Free Library in front of the Meetinghouse, which is well used by children in the neighborhood.

A sense of the Living Spirit is strongly present in our building on Sundays as we reach out with hugs and loving hearts to all who walk in our door, whether members and dear F/friends of many years, new attenders, curious students, snowbirds from the north, young people from local rehab centers fulfilling their program's spiritual component, or sojourners seeking a quiet space. We look forward to a year of growing in the Spirit as individuals and as a faith community, as we remember William Penn's words, "Let us see what love can do."

Ellie Caldwell, Interim Clerk

Saint Petersburg Monthly Meeting

Spiritual State Of The St Petersburg Religious Society Of Friends 2017

This report is a compilation of thoughtful input from the Meeting's committee clerks and members. Care and Counsel and Worship and Ministry are grateful for the prompt responses we received when asked to address the 2017 Spiritual State of the Meeting.

Our Meeting practices what we hope is radical hospitality toward guests and returning attenders and members. We try to personally greet and visit with newcomers, show them around, invite them to socialize, and if they choose to leave us an address in the guest book, we follow up with a card of thanks for their presence. We added two new members, Michelle Flint and Francis Morgan, parents of a young child.

The Hospitality Committee creates a consistently positive atmosphere over great food each week, and at events held throughout the year such as workshops and Quarterly Meeting, much of it contributed by thoughtful members. There is ongoing, thoughtful discussion about protocol for making sure our kitchen and food handling is safe and sanitary. Hospitality and the Property Committees coordinated workdays to 'clean up and clean out' together.

The Property Committee continues its mission to provide a welcoming, safe, and clean environment for worship. A considerable amount of work has been done in the yard and lawn, and members have contributed time and energy.

There is division within the Meeting concerning the allocation of financial resources between the needed care and maintenance of existing property and adding an additional building. We desire to be spiritually led by our decisions and continue to seek discernment.

Worship and Ministry has initiated and sustained a study group focused on SEYM Faith and Practice which regularly attracts 8-10 students. The Adult First Day School has more than doubled in size this year, with 15-20 regular participants. We enjoy deep, meaningful discussions where we listen and learn from each other's measure of Light. We love each other and try to respect each other. The Children's First Day School is operating on a regular basis, with two regular attenders. We are grateful for the loving care, meaningful activities and spiritual guidance the teachers provide. The Women's and Men's Groups meet monthly, prefaced by a simple meal of soup and dessert. These activities have fostered a sense of community, emotional and spiritual unity. Support is offered to those who need it in stressful times which then flows in a positive way into the Meeting as a whole.

We struggle and continue to try to learn how to deal with conflicts within the meeting in a loving manner that reflects our commitment to love and non violence. We fall short many times, and ask the Yearly Meeting to hold us all in the Light as we try to work through these difficulties.

We started a twice a month worship group for our Friends, the Heftes, at their place of residence, as Darrell is unable to attend his beloved Meeting. In November, our Meeting celebrated their Renewal of Marriage Vows. Our spiritual lives have been enriched by several important events: we hosted a Clerking Workshop by Arthur Larrabee,

A Laughter Yoga Workshop by Joel Cook, and Quarterly Meeting. Regional Meetings participated at these events, and our spiritual lives were enriched.

On Jan 21, Quakers from St Petersburg spearheaded the city's galvanizing Women's March for Peace and Social Justice. This has increased a growing awareness of our presence in the community, and an increase in politically and socially active groups who utilize the Meeting House to meet and gather.

Peace and Social Justice events included Circus McGurkis, which was reinvented in coordination with 4-5 other faith and non-profit groups which was a huge success. The Testimonies of SPICE were evident in the planning and rendition of the event.

We actively participate in events that support the LGBTQ community, interfaith community building, and Martin Luther King Jr. events.

We continue to feed the homeless community every Friday evening with the UU church. Toiletries and clothing that have been collected are distributed. Peace and Social concerns also plays a big part in keeping our local food bank stocked. We contributed toward the hurricane relief efforts.

Respectfully, Carol Streb, clerk of Worship and Ministry

Sarasota Friends Meeting Spiritual State of the Meeting Report - 2017

The Spiritual State of Sarasota Monthly Meeting continues to grow and be enhanced by those who worship with us and by the many varied activities within the Meeting, as evidenced by a wonderful Worship Sharing where we considered two SEYM queries.

The Meeting affords us a safe and spiritually enhanced sense of community. As one of our people described it, it gives her a safe, quiet place for the kernel within to sprout into full blossoming spirituality. Everyone appreciates being in a community of like-minded people. The spiritual growth of those within Meeting is enhanced by the closeness we all feel with each other while the community of quiet worship allows solace and feeds the spirit.

There are several things many in the meeting don't see but which are important nevertheless to everyone in the meeting. There are several in Meeting who are no longer able or are too young to drive, hence the need for "Quaker Chauffeurs", all of whom say they get more out of driving than do their "fares". The kindness each of us shows to others in the Meeting is manifested in so many ways and helps to bind us together. Emails and phone calls have also helped us hold persons in the Light as we stay connected even though we are spread far and wide.

Beyond the meetinghouse doors there are several opportunities open to us and which we try to take advantage of within our limitations. The Meeting has taken the Gulf Coast Friends Worship Group, which meets in Venice, under its care. The men of the Meeting continue to meet regularly for lunch each month, thus keeping alive the sense of community. And our potlucks thrive year round, no matter how many snowbirds have vanished!

Our young continue to lead us in activism. Our connection to the Coalition of Immokalee Workers (CIW) continues, even as one of the young motivators is in college! Another Young Friend is still in high school, AND is one of the founders of the Fair Food Alliance which supports the CIW in words and actions! One of our members feels we should be doing more in terms of homelessness and race relations, but believes we are moving in the right direction. In addition, our adult activists also participate on various local programs, including the Brady Gun Control chapter, the Prayer Protection Group at the nearby mosque, and FCNL lobbying efforts.

The sense of community is also strengthened by, as one person described it, the "Circle of Life". Quaker Bakers—our Young Friends—continue to delight us on the first First Day of each month by preparing mouth watering yummys from cookies to pizza. The fellowship—young and old together—provide us delicious enjoyment in so many ways! However, we feel a sense of sadness when considering the older members whom we see less and less of as each year passes. Our oldest member, Marie Hausman is 103 and in failing health. (Marie passed away since this report was written.) Our our [now] oldest member, Iris Ingram —also 103—is no longer living in the area. Sadly, we lost our treasured third centenarian, Mary Elmendorf, who left us at age 100 in September. A beautiful and well-attended memorial service, in the manner of Friends, was held for her at New College where we worshiped so many years ago.

Overall, 2017 was a very good, spiritually uplifted, community-built year in Sarasota Monthly Meeting. True, we had our challenges, but we are overcoming them in a loving manner guided by our Quaker beliefs. We are optimistic about the coming year and look forward to it with love, trust, and faith.

Savannah Friends Meeting 2017 Spiritual State of the Meeting

In 2017—the first year of Trump—our meetings for worship in silence regularly provided some distancing, balance, and stability. So did our studies of Quaker testimonies and values, which inspired and informed our activism.

We continued to meet on the third floor of Trinity United Methodist Church, the Mother Church of American Methodism, in the Museum Room with portraits of the Wesley brothers and other historical figures looking on. We might joke about the Museum Room being a natural fit for us, but in actuality we have a number of young adults who attend and participate, including three couples with children. The children meet in Room 317, our nursery, located over the church organ, which during its crescendos causes the room to quake as a Quaker should.

Our meeting is also enriched by Quaker travelers, visitors, and tourists. Some visitors stay part of the year, including Calum and Leah Johnson and their three-year-old son Adric from Fort Wayne, Indiana; Jim Morgan, from Brooklyn MM, who comes down for a month; and Tracey Dolan, from Valley Forge MM, who stays for six months and serves as our Assistant Clerk and sometimes our Recording Clerk.

With John Harris (Chair), Jessica Binkley, and Sandy Branam, Tracey also serves on the Worship and Ministry Committee, which among its duties arranges for religious education the first Sunday of the month. Religious education presentations included John Harris's talks on early Friends, Harold Branam's report on Savannah's FCNL advocacy team, and Liz Dykes's creative, hilarious session of Savannah Meeting Jeopardy.

The Spiritual Book Club meets at Tracey's house. In 2017 interest in Savannah's own Flannery O'Connor carried over from our meeting's Book Group to the Spiritual Book Club (yes, we have two book groups). We visited O'Connor's childhood home on Lafayette Square across from the looming Cathedral of St. John the Baptist. Later in the year we read and discussed O'Connor's *A Prayer Journal*, which she kept as a young student at the famous University of Iowa Writer's Workshop. *A Prayer Journal* is a great prelude to her short stories, some of which we are reading in 2018.

The Book Group read O'Connor's *The Complete Stories*, though discussion focused on only a few stories. For example, "A Good Man Is Hard to Find" is so shocking and violent that some people find it hard to read, but the discussion brought out how O'Connor's Catholic beliefs inform it. The Book Group also read William Faulkner's *As I Lay Dying*, Matthew Desmond's *Evicted: Poverty and Profit in the American City*, Elmore Leonard's *Raylan*, and John McWhorter's *Our Magnificent Bastard Tongue: The Untold History of English*.

Besides readers, the meeting also includes some activists. Mary Alpern organized the Women's March in Savannah. The Savannah FCNL Advocacy Team, Georgia's first, continued to join informative FCNL conference calls, write letters to editors, and lobby congressman. Members of the team published letters in the Savannah Morning News, and Harold Branam attended FCNL's annual meeting in November. While in Washington Harold lobbied local Representative Earl "Buddy" Carter and joined with the Atlanta team to lobby Georgia Senators David Perdue and Johnny Isakson. The issue for the year was excessive and wasteful military spending.

While FCNL lobbying did not prevent a rise in military spending, actions by individuals did make a difference in other matters. Sandy Branam was upset over President Trump's remarks about hurricane-devastated Puerto Rico, which she has visited and loves. An artist and illustrator, Sandy organized an art

sale by Savannah artists to benefit Puerto Rico. Over one hundred artists donated their work, and Sandy interviewed on local TV stations. On December 16, Sandy's 80th birthday, the sale was held in the spacious community hall of Asbury Memorial United Methodist Church (known as "The Broadway Church" for its performances of musicals). Well attended, the sale raised over \$10,000 in cash and checks, and thousands more in credit card sales went directly to UMCOR (United Methodist Committee on Relief), the top-rated charity that will distribute 100% of the funds raised to Puerto Rico.

The fundraiser also had some incidental benefits. An evaluation committee described the fundraiser as "a community coming together." Cooperation with Asbury Memorial and UMCOR also gave us a fresh appreciation for our good working relationship with the United Methodists, who operate the Life Enrichment Center where SEYM meets annually and who are part of our wider community. After many years at Trinity United Methodist Church, Savannah Friends are now moving to a detached meeting site—a house behind and belonging to Wesley Oak United Methodist Church, 3124 East Victory Drive, Savannah, GA 31404. It seems a symbolic move: We are leaving the Museum Room and (as of April 1, 2018) meeting in Joy Cottage.

Written by Harold Branam, with input from members and attenders of Savannah Friends Meeting

Tallahassee Monthly Meeting 2017 Spiritual State Of The Meeting Report

Friends gathered in worship to reflect on queries and share their experiences of our Spiritual State of the Meeting.

Friends have felt the support of being bound together in community through deep, rich, grounding worship that brings us back to our center. Through worship, we have felt the balm of silence and the endurance of Quakerism as a lifeline through personal and world trials. We have been kept open to the ongoing guidance of the Spirit in living beyond the walls of the meeting room. Friends have been learning to listen without judgment both during the stillness and with vocal ministry, realizing that all ministry need not be relevant to each person. During the times when there has been no vocal ministry we have been challenged to go deep and hear the message that is there for us – a stretch if we had been accustomed to ministry like a sermon. We look forward to worship as a time to be open and truthful.

We have struggled at times with the tender issue of the quality of vocal ministry – the need for messages to reflect their source in the Christ Spirit, God or Love. There have been times when ministry has followed too quickly after a previous message, without time for discernment as to whether the message was meant for the body of worshipers, and without time to allow a previous message to be absorbed within. Occasionally, some Friends have experienced the pain of an unkind or too-pointed message. Such times have called us to examine our eldership roles and the need to perform them with integrity and love. When some members and attenders have not participated during Second Hours on the topic of spirit-led vocal ministry, our meetings for worship have served as their learning ground. Even though we have experienced some uneven messages, we have been blessed with deep vocal ministry through song that have sometimes carried us through the hard places.

More Friends have attended meeting for worship with a concern for business this year as compared to last year. They have experienced it on a spectrum from least favorite activity to joy and eagerness to attend. It has been the place of true community for some Friends; it is more than worship and business, it is where we meet as one body and manifest our spirituality to the outside world. On the other hand, some Friends felt it as an “add on” this year, not as a testimony to ourselves or the world. Meeting for Worship for Business has taught us to grow spiritually during challenging issues. Though we lost sight of God’s presence at times, and thus lost worship, we have also learned to refrain when we felt like reacting. It has been a beautiful spiritual discipline to return to silence and listen to Spirit. Some of us have learned to wear our “clerking hats”, knowing that meeting for worship for business is a crucial communal process and not the responsibility of only the Clerk. Friends appreciated the beautiful crafting of minutes and the Recording Clerk expressed appreciation for his spiritual growth in that role.

Beyond business meetings, Friends have appreciated the simplicity of the Second Hour and enjoyed people sharing their spiritual lives. Some Friends have become more politically active because of being a part of the meeting community. We have sometimes struggled to find time to meet in our committees and do our appointed work. Seasoned Friends need to help the meeting feel the joy that can be found in gathering together in committees and letting the Spirit guide us in our work in and beyond the meetinghouse.

Friends within the meeting have faithfully visited Friends unable to attend, and reported to the rest of the community. Other Friends have felt supported in their world views by being surrounded by a community that shares many of those views. Other Friends appreciate the way some of us “craft our words” and are supportive of one another, helping them to feel welcome. We have provided rides to meeting for those who needed transportation.

We were grateful to have supported two of our Adult Young Friends who provided important leadership for us through their FCNL advocacy efforts in Washington, D.C. and local visits to legislators. We also enjoyed becoming better informed about immigration issues through them. These activities influenced one of the Adult Young Friends to become more active in the meeting.

Though we offer First Day School, children have come only a few times. We wish we had more younger children. We seek to understand the reasons for the absence of youth. We asked ourselves what we might do differently to have a more vibrant experience for them – to help them experience what it means to become a vital part of our community. A Friend mentioned that a Young Adult Friend, who has since moved out of state, learned her skills of listening attention with an elder in need of care through her attendance as a child at meeting for worship. We are continuing our discernment of this concern.

We helped to provide material goods to Immokalee Farm Workers after Hurricane Irma and some of us provided food for the annual CROP Walk. We were grateful to follow the initiative of Orlando Friends Meeting in joining the Florida Coalition to Prevent Gun Violence. We continued to support a group home for those with mental illness, Hilltop, by providing Christmas gifts for residents. We visited the Tallahassee Islamic Center and in return, the Imam presented his view of Islam in one of our Second Hours. We provided hospitality for the Friends General Conference Nominating Committee in June. We helped support a local Guardian Ad Litem family with money for food. It was also a joy to have supported the appearance here in Tallahassee of the SEYM Walton lecturer, Peterson Toscano, at FSU. Friends continued to provide prison ministry through visits and letter writing at the Florida Correctional Institution in Marianna and elsewhere. Some Friends joined AFSC staff from Miami in visits to legislators around the immigration issue. We have provided a space for local Sacred Harp singers and the Tallahassee Area Threshold Choir to meet. The latter sing at the bedside to comfort ill or dying people and their families. Our retreat in Sept., led by Beverly Ward, SEYM Field Secretary for Earthcare, was postponed because of Hurricane Irma. We are looking forward to February, 2018, for a retry of the retreat.

We were blessed when former member Robert Allenson renewed his membership in our meeting this year. We were doubly blessed when two couples asked to be married under our care in the coming year. We remain grateful for our community, supported by God's love, a love we share with one another. We look forward to seeing how we, as a body, might communicate this love more visibly within the Tallahassee community and the wider world.

Tallahassee Monthly Meeting of The Religious Society of Friends
Phoebe Andersen, clerk
December 2017

The queries we used in our discernment are as follows:

- *In what ways has Meeting for Worship nurtured my spiritual growth?*
- *In what ways have Meeting for Business and other meeting activities both nurtured and challenged my spiritual growth?*
- *In what ways have we supported each other over the past year as members of our beloved community?*
- *In what ways have we supported our youth in the life of our Meeting?*
- *In what ways, if any, could we increase our support for one another?*
- *In what ways, if any, might we deepen the support of our youth within our community?*
- *In what ways has our meeting's witness to the wider community been visible in the last year?*

Tampa Monthly Meeting Spiritual State of the Meeting Report for 2017

How has our Meeting for Worship or other Meeting activities nurtured our spiritual growth?

Tampa Friends actively engage in various activities to establish space for all to feel welcome, wherever they are on their spiritual path. Intentional gatherings along with regular Meetings for Worship include Adult First Day School, mid-week Spiritual Reflection, Retreats, and Friendly Dinners. These activities are forward looking, and the consistency of these activities create a solid foundation for nurturing each person's spiritual growth and are crucial to our viability as a Meeting. As a community we hold one another in the Light as we respond to our individual callings and seek to nourish the seeds of others. Using the new Meetinghouse to host musical guest concerts and other events offers the opportunity to welcome people from the broader community who might be intimidated by an unfamiliar form of Worship. As we invite seekers, we encourage people whose spiritual journey leads them through our Meeting onward to their own spiritual home.

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

The new Meetinghouse serves as an invitation to the local community to learn more about Quakers as there is ample space for more people to be present. Attendance at Meeting for Worship has grown from 8 to 12 people to upwards of 20 people. This past year we have welcomed 4 new Friends into membership. Hope is found not only in the number of new attendees but in the depth of participation of all. Those whose daily lives keep them from being fully engaged, find ways to be active within the Meeting by providing transportation, hospitality, and discernment. Meeting for Worship, silence, centering, and fellowship offers respite from the vitriolic negativity in society and the "world." The contrast between methods of communication among Friends compared to present day media is a significant source of hope; where comforting, encouraging, and simply the sense of oneness gleaned from seeing each other at Meeting for Worship is nurturing to Friends and attenders. Friends expressed a sense of missing out when unable to attend Meeting for Worship and hold a concern to be able to share about Quaker values with others. Worship ignites hope and carries a sense of Presence into our daily lives. This brings a sense of fullness to those inner empty spaces and serves as a lifeline. Living our lives with integrity is observed by people in the community during each of our activities and serves to bring hope to the broader world. As part of the "younger" Southeastern Yearly Meeting, Tampa Friends are sensitive to Florida Friends having more adult convinced Friends than birthright Friends and are aware that being open can bring new people to Quakerism. Tampa Friends are sharing their gifts within the Meeting as well as in local, regional, national, and international manners of witness. This reflects the courage of our Meeting and of Quakers in general to face what may seem to be insurmountable odds to undertake actions that would dismay many in more powerful positions. We find this faith and practice to be nurturing.

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

We continue outreach toward members and attenders who have been absent from Meeting for Worship for a while by sending "Thinking of You" cards. We also stay connected through social media, our website, and our newsletter. The sense of growing leadership shared among more Friends is paired with a vision of using the Meetinghouse and first building as a community center with activities taking place where people are welcome each day or night of the week. Thoughtful use of Tampa Meetinghouse space to bring Friends' message to the world may include informative presentations from Quaker groups that continue our ongoing witness. Additionally, sharing individual experiences of Friends meeting challenges of daily work, such as teaching, and how viewing work through a Quaker lens transforms it into ministry, has a positive impact on all touched by it. Tampa Friends value the diversity of the people

in our community and are interested in strengthening and deepening relationships among them. Other ways to expand in-reach as well as outreach include participating in 'letters to the editor' efforts in the newspaper, accessing the valuable resources in our library, sharing conversations regarding ways to be a Friend, adding a hearing-assistance system to the Meetinghouse, and making physical improvements to the property such as upgraded signage and an expanded porch with wheelchair access between the two buildings.

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

Tampa Friends have a strong and intentional commitment to the spiritual state of the Meeting as stewards of “the ground on which we stand.” We recognize that nurturing the spirit is an ongoing effort and not static. We seek to bring Quakerism into all our activities and interactions within the Meeting and beyond in a faithful manner, seeing “that of God” in each individual that we encounter. First Day Meeting for Worship gives us the spiritual means to live in love throughout our lives. Our commitment to deep and meaningful Worship is evidenced through actively remaining present with and for one another. The love and care for one another in Meeting and beyond was especially poignant for those present for the memorial service held for Bo Nicholson. Witnessing to love in action equips us to meet the challenges of the current climate of political divisiveness and societal negativity. The ongoing commitment to peace work among Tampa Friends through service to Friends Peace Teams, Friends Committee on National Legislation, Right Sharing of World Resources, and Southeastern Yearly Meeting Earth Care Field Secretary manifests as love in action. Meeting for Worship with a Concern for Business serves as witness to how we make decisions. Each of us has the opportunity to serve and the responsibility to grow within Meeting. As we speak from the silence in vocal ministry we are careful to remain present for all in attendance and consider our faithfulness to the ministry we are given to speak.

Winter Park Meeting Spiritual State of the Meeting 2017

We are continuing in the sense of the meeting that the original founders intended. Focused on simplicity and nurturing of our spirits we continue to have a dedicated base group with serious attenders supporting the growth of the meeting. We are thankful for a place to meet and friends to meet with. We hold in the Light all those who are with us in spirit. Following our meeting for business, we have a pot luck and a meeting for learning with an organized spiritual discussion.

---February Meeting Minute ,2018-2