Southeastern Yearly Meeting  
_of the Religious Society of Friends_  

**Spiritual State of the Meeting Reports**  
_for the calendar year_  

**2019**  

“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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'Yield and you need not break:'
Bent you can straighten,
Emptied you can hold,
Torn you can mend . . .

We held a First Day gathering that included members, regular and first-time attenders to address the queries from Southeastern Yearly Meeting. This process brought us thoughtful consideration of what we have learned, what we care about, and what we still need to do. Our meeting has experienced some tears at our fabric this past year and we want to restore ourselves with wisdom and in the spirit of love and kindness.

Fresh viewing and openness are essential. So, rather than provide a report in the brick-like structure of sentences and paragraphs, this reply to the queries is formed more like a collage. As with collage, pieces can be cut out, rearranged, superimposed, and put together in many ways. Also, what we are presenting does not cover all of our meeting’s participations and concerns. We are framing the ones needing emphasis for 2020.

**OUR WORSHIP**

How has our meeting for worship or other meeting activities nurtured our spiritual growth?

Has there been a deepening and strengthening of the sense of the Divine Presence in our midst during the past year? Do we feel a sense of our individual spirits fusing into an undivided group as we worship? Do we leave our meetings filled with a sense of love and peace and courage to meet the challenge of Spirit filled living?

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

**OUR WORSHIP IS ENRICHED**

**BY A VARIETY OF NEW PARTICIPANTS.**

**INDIVIDUALS EXPRESS — WITH GRATITUDE —**
**DEEP EXPERIENCES WITHIN WORSHIP, WITHIN THE SILENCE.**

Our beginning an Adult First Day School can support our strengthening and understanding of worship and Quaker experience.

We look forward to
And want to nourish
Rich vocal ministry.

We are networking more:
We hosted Bystander Training with Faith United Church of Christ, Dunedin and opened communication with Shiloh Missionary Baptist Church, our neighbor and meeting place landholder.
WE WELCOME OUR NEW DIVERSITY AND WANT A DIVERSITY THAT WORKS.
“LET’S BE LIKE A SALAD, NOT AN ORDINARY SALAD,
BUT ONE MORE LIKE A WALDORF SALAD.”

SURE, WE’LL HAVE GROWING PAINS.

WE NEED TO ENCOURAGE PARTICIPATION IN THE WIDER QUAKER COMMUNITY
SO THAT WE CAN SHARE AND DRAW ON ONE ANOTHER’S TALENTS.

OUR RELATING

How do we support each other as members of this beloved community?

What has already and would nourish you in our meeting?

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

The warm welcomes . . . are welcome!

Let’s embrace all aspects of ourselves
and one another.

And let’s continue to share information about
one another in the spirit of caring.

But in this sharing, let’s be aware that we may need to get permission about certain things from the affected persons, because of their particular needs and their wanting privacy.

Individual kindnesses matter!

AS WE GROW, MINISTRY & COUNSEL
WILL BE CALLED TO NEW ROLES.

Q-News has been most valuable for inclusiveness and sharing of current information.
Thanks, Mike Flanery! And in addition, we need to improve and/or design other approaches to communication, including our website.

THE SMALL SIZE OF OUR MEETING ALLOWS US FACE TO FACE ‘PRIMARY’ RELATING. However, we are scattered geographically and need to find more ways to pull together for intimate gatherings, more fellowship gatherings as we have had other years. Would mid-week meetings help?

An attender expresses appreciation for the time and space to develop listening to the Spirit.
THROUGH DIFFICULTIES IN RELATING HAS COME GROWTH.

OUR WORK

How does the spirit of worship extend into our committee work and into meeting for worship with a concern for business?

A member says, “I am bothered that I let concerns about business get in the way of worship.”

We need to REVEAL OURSELVES TO OURSELVES. Recognize who each of us is. Look for skills and talents. Help one another by encouraging new talents. WE NEED EVERYONE’S HELP! SO LET’S ASK NEW ATTENDERS TO HELP, GIVE RESPONSIBILITY TO NEW MEMBERS. ASK WHAT PEOPLE WANT OR WANT TO DO?

INVITE PARTICIPATION. IN GROUP DISCUSSIONS, THE QUIETEST OFTEN HAVE THE MOST TO SAY.

IN MEETING FOR BUSINESS, WE NEED PATIENCE, TO “LET THE BREAD RISE.” AND THESE ARE MEETINGS FOR WORSHIP WITH ATTENTION TO BUSINESS, SO LET’S TRUST SILENCE AND CALL FOR IT OFTEN.

So, sure, we can talk about seasoning and patience but delays can lead to festering. Let’s not allow easy forgetting when something needs more attention. We must keep issues & concerns present & current until there’s repair or resolution.

Respond with love when best you can. And show gentleness to people taking responsibility and making decisions.

The number of people attending Meeting for Worship has grown from twelve or fifteen to twenty and sometimes thirty. Let’s trust “continuing revelation” — and acknowledge that our Meeting’s work is barely beginning, and that we have more to do.

Rick Brice
Clerk of the Meeting
OUR WORSHIP

WE WELCOME OUR NEW DIVERSITY AND WANT A DIVERSITY THAT WORKS.
“LET’S BE LIKE A SALAD, NOT AN ORDINARY SALAD, BUT ONE MORE LIKE A WALDORF SALAD.”

As we grow, ministry & counsel will be called to new roles.

Individual kindnesses matter!

Our beginning an adult first day school can support our strengthening and understanding of worship and Quaker experience.

We look forward to and want to nourish rich vocal ministry.

An attender expresses appreciation for the time and space to develop listening to the Spirit.

OUR RELATING

The small size of our meeting allows us face to face ‘primary’ relating. However, we are scattered geographically and need to find more ways to pull together for intimate gatherings, more fellowship gatherings as we have had other years. Would mid-week meetings help?

Let’s embrace all aspects of ourselves and one another.

And let’s continue to share information in the spirit of caring. But in this sharing, let’s be aware that we may need to get permission about certain things from the affected persons, because of their particular needs and their wanting privacy.

THE QUIETEST OFTEN HAVE THE MOST TO SAY.

We need to reveal ourselves to ourselves. Recognize who each of us is. Look for skills and talents. Help one another by encouraging new talents. We need everyone’s help! So let’s ask new attenders to help. Give responsibility to new members. Ask what people want or want to do?

Respond with love when best you can. And show gentleness to people taking responsibility and making decisions.

OUR WORK

Our worship is enriched by a variety of new participants.

In Meetings for Worship with Attention to Business, we need patience, to “let the bread rise.” As in worship, we need to trust silence and call for it often.

So, sure, we can talk about seasoning and patience, but delays can lead to festering. Let’s not allow easy forgetting, when something needs more attention. We must keep issues & concerns present & current until there’s repair or resolution.

Throughout difficulties in relating has come growth.

We’ll have growing pains.

The number of people attending Meeting for Worship has grown from twelve or fifteen to twenty and sometimes thirty. Let’s trust continuing revelation and acknowledge that our Meeting’s work is barely beginning, that we have more to do.
Fort Lauderdale Friends Meeting
2019 Spiritual State of the Meeting Report

During 2019, Fort Lauderdale Friends Meeting has enjoyed a number of visitors and new attenders. We appreciate the diversity in our group.

Our Meetings for Worship contain a good mix of silence and spoken messages. We continue to find that the life of our Meeting enriches our personal lives.

Individually, and as a group, we have been active with refugee issues and environmental issues. From her home in North Carolina, Mary Jo Klingel continues her involvement in Quaker Earthcare Witness.

Brian Humphrey
Clerk of the Meeting
Are we a loving community?

Friends agreed that we have a loving and accepting community of regular members and attenders. Hugs are common among Friends, and people seem genuinely glad to greet one another, whether the separation has been for a week or for many months. Visitors to the meeting often comment on the friendliness of the meeting. We work to be aware of each other’s needs and to find ways to support those needs. Some of our community have formed “prayer groups” where concerns and needs of the group and others are shared prior to the prayer time.

Is the meeting welcoming to visitors and accepting of diversity of beliefs? Are we a disciplined community?

Visitors to the meeting often comment on the friendliness of the meeting. We try to be accepting and welcoming of all visitors. We seem to do well in greeting and speaking to visitors, getting them to sign our visitors’ book and showing them our pamphlets and our library. At times we struggle to help others understand our ways of worship and conducting business (Quaker process) but we think that sometimes newcomers feel criticized when we try to mentor them on Quaker ways. Formally, we have tried to address those concerns by having a periodic Quakerism 101 or Quaker Process Retreat. We continue to explore avenues to maintain the depth of our spirituality and the integrity of our Quaker Life while accepting and welcoming a diversity of beliefs.

We acknowledge that we are challenged to welcome families with young and school-age children in ways that are supportive to the families. We are trying to formulate policies that work for all of us, and to make plans for First Day School and Young Adult Friends that are supportive and respectful to the younger participants in our meeting. The Meeting has formed a planning committee to start the task of forming a First Day program that will meet the needs of young people for discussion and questioning, while respecting the need of the volunteer resource Friends to experience worship most of the time. Our community remains challenged by limitations of our physical facility, especially relating to the lack of space for caring for children outside of the meeting room. The Meeting has established an ad hoc committee to consider the issues, and to present to Friends in 2020 queries that may help us to separate needs from desires, and to fully appreciate the various costs of change.

Are we a spiritual community?
Is worship generally spirit-led and satisfying?
Our length of worship is generally governed by the clock, more so than some Friends would wish. However, the meeting for worship overseer is usually sensitive to dynamics of any particular meeting for
worship, especially allowing time for further reflection on the heel of a message spoken late in the meeting.

We recognize the healing and transformative power to the individual and the group through the weighted silence as well as the spoken spiritual messages that come out of the weighted silence. However, we recognize that there are sometimes messages that do not seem to be spirit-led, and that sometimes an individual may speak too quickly following the prior speaker, thus not providing sufficient time for us to reflect and reconnect to the silence.

Afterthoughts are invited at the conclusion of meeting, to extend time for sharing thoughts that did not rise to the level of vocal ministry during the formal period of worship. Some people use the opportunity to share concerns that are more secular and political, while others may use the time to reveal something about themselves to the group. Shy people, or people who are uncomfortable claiming the authority of Spirit for their statements, seem to find the afterthoughts period a more welcoming time to speak.

**Are we a community committed to peace?**
We have a strong commitment to peace in the broader community. The Peace and Social Concerns Committee is thriving and busy, and we noted that it includes not only peace work, but also many social justice concerns, both in our community and beyond. Another group has been forming over the past year focused on the environmental issues and concerns of our local area.

We recognize that peace must always begin at home. There is sometimes tension when we conduct meetings for business, and we can be challenged while invigorated by intensity of convictions. We need to continually focus on trust and Quaker process. We hope to remain faithful to that still small voice that urges us to take part in God’s work, both as individuals and as a community of faith.

Approved 9th day February 2020

Joan Culver
Clerk of the Meeting
As we reflect on the Spiritual State of our Meeting, we see a meeting with a strong spiritual foundation upon which we are building. We are continuing to experience the results of a deliberate choice to build that spiritual foundation as our first priority, including a continuing increase in a vital and robust vocal ministry.

Over the last several years we have lost a number of longtime stalwart members to death. In April longtime member Gene Beardsley died unexpectedly during a surgical procedure.

Member Jim Morrison and attenders Bill Dawson and Andy Merritt passed away in late summer and early fall. Several others have continuing care responsibilities as loved ones experience significant declining cognitive or physical function. We have seen other members of our community come together in a sense of love and spiritual commitment to support those who are in need. We see this in a concrete way in the clean-up after our social hour on First Day. We went out of our comfort zone of assigning clean-up duties and simply announced that it was the responsibility of the entire community. After a few months, Friends who seldom helped with clean-up began to take a turn with the dishwasher or scraping plates. Others began to linger longer, sometimes for hours. Conversations deepened into many more spiritual topics.

In April we organized a one-day Meeting retreat at a park. We spent most of the day exploring our individual spiritual journeys. The Mid-Week Meeting that we began last year continues to nourish those who attend. Members of both the First Day worship and the Mid-Week worship are finding spiritual richness from many traditions, including indigenous Native American spirituality and Eastern traditions such as Qigong. We have begun singing for a period before Meeting for Worship, which enriches our time together.

We are experimenting somewhat with our Meeting for Business practices. We began asking for agenda items, including proposed minutes, reports, etc., in 2018 well in advance so that they may be shared with the meeting community prior to the meeting for business. Our goal was to promote a more spirit-led atmosphere in the actual meeting as we discern a way forward. Although there have been challenges, this process is gradually leading to a better informed and deeper sense of Spirit in conducting the business of the Meeting.

We are also experimenting with different modes of communication. We laid down our printed newsletter in 2017; a one page printed ‘bulletin’ with the calendar for the month, the next month, and the advices and queries is available in the foyer. The information that was available in the newsletter is available on our website. Announcements of events is also available on our Facebook page. We are gradually learning how to use these electronic media more effectively.

We continue to reach out into the community. We have continued our long-term support of the Guatemalan Scholarship Fund. We have provided sweat equity support as well as monetary support to the local sanctuary church. We continue to have a Moral Mondays witness in support of immigration justice. In 2018 we added a project with the Caring and Sharing Learning School to assist with an ongoing garden project. That project has continued. In 2019 we decided to convert our ‘Christmas Family Project’ into an ongoing support for a local elementary ‘School Project.’ This project will provide after school care for some children, some school supplies (books, etc.) and perhaps some reading buddies. We sponsored A
Right Relationships with Native Peoples and the How We Win workshops, inviting members of the wider community.

With the increased focus on spiritual activities, the broadening of modes of communication, and expansion of the group that carries the ordinary weekly chores, we continue to draw closer together.

Bonnie Zimmer and Jean Larson
Co-Clerks of the Meeting
Lake Wales Worship Group
2019 Spiritual State of the Worship Group

Our attendance at meetings varies from 2 to 7, with a few regulars and one seasonal. We continue to have a strong sense of community. Two of us took part in a vigil at the immigrant children's detention center in Homestead, Florida. They also have advocated for gun control in Highlands County, Florida. We appreciate the visit last Spring by some Friends from the St. Petersburg Meeting.

Bill Rapp
on behalf of Lake Wales Worship Group
Quaker Meeting of Melbourne
2019 Spiritual State of the Meeting

Quaker Meeting of Melbourne meets weekly to worship in the coffee house of the Friendship Fellowship at Pineda, a local Unitarian church. Our small size allows us to engage in frequent informal discussion at the rise of meeting. Additionally, we meet in social gatherings and meetings for enrichment outside of the meeting for worship; all these activities allow us to get to know each other more deeply and share in each other’s spiritual growth. We believe that our care for each other is an expressed measure of how God is working in the meeting. The spirit of the meeting has led individuals to spiritual, worshipful support of others in the group in need this past year.

We are a small meeting, but while we would welcome more members in our community, we see strengths in our size. We are a welcoming group, greeting visitors and new attenders with joy. We are an accepting and non-dogmatic gathering. Sharing the responsibilities of clerk of meeting and recording clerk among us has strengthened participation, led us to investigate the role of the individual within the corporate meeting, and has allowed members to utilize their spiritual gifts in support of the meeting. We have come to see clerking as a function within the meeting, not as a position, and are empowered to determine how best to make that function work for the meeting. Our lack of a meeting house has also generated connection with Friendship Fellowship, and we have attended services and participated in community outreach alongside them this year.

Although our numbers and our resources are small, we have reached beyond our meeting to the wider community this past year. The meeting encourages members and attenders to act on individual leadings and explores those leadings which are corporate. Members and attenders have attended climate change demonstrations to express our concerns for the earth we steward, and we have supported the local Sharing Center with donations of canned goods monthly. Highlights of this past year for our meeting have been visits from Treasure Coast Friends as well as visits from other traveling Friends.

Our goals and desires for the coming year include more interaction with other meetings, and with Southeastern Yearly Meeting, possibly in the form of invited speakers from the latter. We seek to establish more of a presence in the wider community as a way of bearing witness to the hope of Quaker testimonies in these difficult times, through continued thoughtful consideration of, and participation in, concerns shared by the meeting as a whole. We would like to develop more visibility so that people can find us, through online and physical presence, with attention to visitors who may be unfamiliar with unprogrammed worship. Our enrichment activities have been appreciated by members of our meeting, and we hope to expand these in the coming year.

Susan Hope Asher
Clerk of the Meeting (Acting)
It has been a time of changes for the Orlando Monthly Meeting as we welcomed new members, said goodbye to some long-term members and attendees, welcomed a new resident at Webster Cottage, and made some needed changes to our worship environment to make it more welcoming to all people.

How has the Spirit been moving among us this past year?

The Spirit is leading us into our local community beyond the Meeting. We began hosting The Reformation Project (LGBTQ+ faith leaders’ group). Other innovative and compatible community groups have expressed interest in using our meeting house for their outreach. We rejoice that the Meeting House is happy it is being used, restored, and enhanced for the benefit not only of Orlando Friends, but for all of the community groups that share our meeting space.

We continue to reflect upon issues that affect all of our membership. We have had time to look long and hard at some difficult truths regarding our societal structures (including white privilege and systemic racism) and to give tender consideration to the place of knowing and courteous language to help refine and perfect our desire for inclusion. For example, we have struggled and will likely continue to struggle with the integration of new and requested pronouns to both be aware of our gendered language and assumptions and to make a safe space for everyone within the meeting. But we are agreed as a community of welcome and inclusive love and we have the will to succeed in this endeavor and expand it to increase inclusion within the broader community.

The Spirit has been leading us into the future during this past year as we considered new technologies such as “Zoom” for making long-distance attendance at critical committee meetings possible. We made connections with new people, and explored new opportunities—one member spent time at Pendle Hill for the Liberation Theology Workshop. Our concern for the future of the meeting is also shown in establishing a “Rising Clerk” position and in our beginning to look at visioning and continuity.

Orlando Monthly Meeting has experienced a number of gathered meetings for worship this year, both within silent meetings and in meetings full of vocal ministry.

How do we support each other as members of this beloved community?

Quakers of Orlando has an average attendance at Sunday Meeting for Worship of 25 – 30 worshippers. We do have some Friends who continue to feel at home as part of our meeting but are physically distant. Despite the small numbers, there are so many aspects to each of us and to our daily exchanges, our correspondence, and our times sharing concerns, sorrows, and joys that we can sometimes seem larger than the boundaries of our time and place.

Friends continue to receive confidential spiritual, emotional, or practical support through our Care and Community committee. This support continues to include homeless and marginally housed attenders and formerly incarcerated attenders. Friends who may not serve regularly on Care and Community committee have joined in the effort to provide practical help such as providing appropriate clothes and shoes to assist one attender to seek and begin work.
As our beloved community grows to include two new worship groups, we are encouraged by the time invested by group convener, Richelle, to attend the clerking workshop at Pendle Hill in order to uplift and benefit all who participate in the St. Augustine Worship Group.

Compassion and consideration for Members, attenders, and all who visit our meeting house was manifested in the change in our restroom signage, which now reads “All Gender Restroom.” It’s a small, but significant change that allows all to feel safe and welcome when using our meeting house facilities. This has positively impacted the desire of community groups to use our meeting house and helped our own gender diverse members and attenders feel welcome and at home.

Many Orlando Friends have gladly opened their homes to host visiting Friends and guest speakers who came to inspire, educate, and encourage us. Our speakers included Eden Grace, our 2019 Michener lecturer, Christine Wolff, Marcelle Martin, Terry Parnell, Laila Hasan, and George Lakey. In addition, many more Friends contributed food and spent long hours setting up before and cleaning up after these events. In addition, Conversation to Explore, our hour-long open conversation after worship on a topic of the facilitator’s own choosing, continues three times a month and enhances our spiritual growth and sense of community. The facilitator rotates among all available, which allows for the introduction of new topics based on the interests and perspectives of the presenter. It allows the whole community to explore and experience insights we might not otherwise receive.

The words of two new members speak to the welcome and support given at Orlando Monthly Meeting: “As rather new members of Orlando Monthly Meeting, we wanted to share our feelings about the warmth of community and the Spirit that we find there. Since Doug and I had been members of two active and committed Meetings (Chattanooga Friends and Wilton Monthly Meeting), we were looking for a place that resembled our experiences. We are so happy to have found that place.”

Orlando Friends welcomed us immediately with warmth and kindness. They have sought to know us and have encouraged us to share our experiences from our other Meetings. They have encouraged us to share in the Life of the Meeting in the ways that we have felt led. So many members have been (F)friends when we have had personal struggles too. Both the community within the Meeting and the Spirit we feel moving through the Meeting have made us feel that Orlando Monthly Meeting is our home.”

Last, but by no means least, we invested in a high-quality first aid kit, an AED (automated external defibrillator), training in hands-only CPR, and training in use of our newly installed AED all of which manifest our active concern for each other. Eighteen people between the ages of 13 and 80-plus attended CPR training at the meeting house with Orlando Fire Department. A similar number participated in the AED training. We had fun learning to save each other’s lives!

How are we taking stock of the meeting’s financial health and planning for ways to use funds for the well-being of others?

A number of factors contribute to awareness of financial health and planning:

- the expert work of our Treasurer
- the dedication of Trustees and our Grants committee
- probing questions from newer members and attenders during our monthly Meeting for Worship with Attention to business
• “Big picture” awareness of long-serving members who recognize the ways our meeting house and Orlando Friends serve both the Central Florida community and the wider SEYM and world Quaker community.

We are fortunate to have the means to make available scholarships and support both for Pendle Hill attendance and for participation in SEYM and FGC events so no one is excluded due to financial hardship. Financial support for Traveling Ministry carries the Spirit and love from our meeting to many more meetings.

Members donate time and resources through their volunteer efforts to support the community; these include our Young Friends Coordinator and members of Property and Hospitality, Worship and Ministry, Care and Community and countless other committees that are part of our vibrant and thriving worship community. We’d also like to celebrate the work of our recording clerk who captures not just the letter of our meetings for worship with attention to business but the spirit of the meeting within the minutes and posts them rapidly on the website as a working record of the life of our meeting.

With the meeting’s approval Treasurer constantly researches and implements new tools and best practices that increase speed, reliability, and tracking of member contributions, vendor payments, and other accounting and bookkeeping tasks.

While not yet complete, substantial work has been done on the corporate restructuring of our meeting. We are already in a better position to look at meeting support, giving, and grants as part of our 2020 visioning process.

Good stewardship of meeting resources is manifested in monthly review of our budget against our actual expenditures and bid comparisons for major investments such our HVAC system.

Where do we see new life emerging in our meeting or losses that we want to honor?

Kody, the SEYM Youth and Young Adult Coordinator has become a member of Orlando Monthly Meeting and lives on-property. This has brought new life to our meeting as Kody has introduced a monthly intergenerational family fun night. He has worked with our Library Coordinator, Young Friends Group Coordinator and Worship and Ministry committee to revamp our youth and young Friends media library. In addition, he has alerted many of us to concerns for young people in deeply challenging situations both within US borders and beyond (issues with migrant detention, maltreatment of Palestinian youth, etc.) Our library coordinator has culled many materials related to other faiths or readily available elsewhere and refocused our library on organizing and adding to our Quaker books, pamphlets, and DVDs so that they are easier to access and use for individual and group spiritual growth.

We do feel the space left by Friends who relocated in 2019 including Bill and Vicki, Kate, Steve, Derek, and Matthew. Some were long serving members and attenders of the meeting and some were only with us briefly, but all brought spirited life and commitment to our meeting. We rejoice that each has moved closer to long held dreams and opportunities and each of them has already found a new Quaker meeting to welcome them.

We are thrilled at the number of engaged new members and attenders. The meeting recorded nine new members in 2019. In addition, new people from Orlando Monthly Meeting are beginning to serve in SEYM positions.
We are deeply appreciative of the new life in our committees thanks to the cheerful and diligent work of our nominating committee. Nominating committee clerk reports the wonderful response of Friends to invitations from the committee and marvels at the number of Friends who spontaneously volunteered to serve in positions vacated by relocating Friends. We are excited about the sense of new life and dedicated clerking in our Peace and Social Concerns committee (a committee of the whole) with a sense of much more to come.

We are delighted that, in addition, to taking St. Augustine Worship Group under our care in First Month 2019, we were able to welcome Deland Worship Group under our care in Twelfth Month 2019. Both our weekday and Wednesday evening worship have provided a “door to the Meeting” for Friends ready to seek new spiritual opportunities. Although we will have to lay down Wednesday evening worship for now, we know it can be taken up again as needed. In addition, our vibrant “Quaker Notes” newsletter, our Quakers of Orlando Facebook page, and our well-maintained calendar and monthly meeting minutes on our website reach out well beyond regular attenders to make known the presence of Friends in the community and to meet seekers where they are. Some Friends have enriched the meeting through their contributions to Quaker Notes and the Quakers of Orlando Facebook page. Contributions have included poetry, reports and announcements of community events, and other enlightening written expressions.

In Closing

We are grateful for each other, for our meeting space, for the guidance of the Spirit, for the growing, changing, thriving life of the community and for the spark that it provides each of us to do good, to do more, to reach out to the helpless and the hurting, and to take good care of one another as we foster the growth of our community and of the spirits of the individual members.

Liz Jenkins
Clerk of the Meeting
Palm Beach Meeting
2019 State of the Meeting Report

Palm Beach Meeting continues to be a presence of quiet worship and peaceful social action in South Florida.

In February we held a retreat with Cecilia Yocum, “Peace Work Among Friends,” which included her work with Peace Teams and our work in the community.

Thanks to the FGC website, we updated our newcomer brochures. In addition, we created name tags for new and old F/friends, making it easier to connect with each other. We continue to enhance our website and Facebook presence.

We spent considerable time on property issues, dealing with termites, the lift, and landscaping. We now have landscaping service and a work day once a month. After replacing a window broken by vandals, we put up signs: “This is a church. Please respect the property.” There’s been no vandalism since.

In terms of religious education, our 9:30 a.m. Meetings for Learning continued with Pendle Hill pamphlet Practical Mysticism by Betsy Meyer, 4 Doors to Meeting for Worship by William Taber, and 12 Quakers and God from the Quaker Quest series. We are currently discussing SEYM Faith and Practice.

In our ministry to the meeting and the community, we gratefully were able to settle a long-time conflict with a neighbor. We created a “Hold in the Light” list for members and attenders, and a “What We Can Do” list for ourselves and others. We wrote a letter in support of immigrants and disseminated it to public officials and the press.

Long-term attender Martha Nungesser transferred her membership to Sacramento, CA, and Peter Ackerman to Gainesville, FL. We welcomed Suzanne and Jon Stout from 15th St. Meeting into membership.

We were able to visit Guy Gray before he died, a periodic attender for many years. The Meeting continues to support Javier del Sol and others in their work with the community garden, including entertainment fund raisers. Also, several community groups meet at the meetinghouse.

We were grateful to be spared the wrath of Hurricane Dorian and later contributed to hurricane relief in the Bahamas. We continue to discuss insurance and issues related to increased climate disruption. We again held our annual Thanksgiving Dinner at the meetinghouse for members and friends, a friendly occasion for fellowship and good eating. In addition, we provide a winter spiritual home to many snowbirds escaping the north.

We continue to remember that everyone needs to be needed as well as cared for and we continue our efforts to be warmer and draw closer to the center friends who tend to stay on the edge of meeting.

Submitted by Ellie Caldwell, Suzanne Stout, Eve Bailey, Sandra Heys, Jack McGregor, Barbara Letsch, Ministry Committee

Sandra Heys
Clerk of the Meeting
Saint Augustine Friends Worship Group
2019 Spiritual State of the Meeting Report

St. Augustine Friends Worship Group began in January 2019, under the care of Orlando Monthly Meeting. We meet every Wednesday evening at 7:00 pm at The United Church (UCC-DOC). Our partnership with The United Church has been foundational in several ways: not only do we meet in this pleasant and comfortable space, but several United Church members have attended meetings for worship from the start.

Our meetings for worship grew early on to an average of nine to 13 attenders weekly, with a core group of around 11 who attend regularly and others who come less frequently but still on a regular basis. We also have a steady stream of “fellow seekers” who inquire about our meetings for worship.

People find out about the St. Augustine Worship Group in a variety of ways, among them, our website at staugustinequakers.org; our listing among Quaker meetings in Florida in Friends Journal; weekly email reminders to interested people; and word of mouth. The United Church added “Quakers Meet Here” along with our website address to their sign on U.S. 1, and several people have reached out to us because of that sign. In our first month of existence, we were introduced to the community through an event on silent or waiting worship which was very well attended.

We have received considerable support from Orlando Monthly Meeting, with several Orlando members visiting over the first year. And Eduardo and Clara Diaz (Miami Monthly Meeting) have been anchors to our fledgling meeting through their attendance at least once a month, when they are in St. Augustine with family.

At the end of January 2020, 11 regular attenders participated in our “Year and A Day” celebration, a special meeting for worship to review our first-year journey and plan for the future, and to consider the spiritual state of the meeting. All marveled at the numbers attending our meetings for worship and at how quickly a core group had gelled. We expressed appreciation for the fruitful linking with The United Church. Also, we addressed the Spiritual State of the Meeting queries via worship sharing. A major theme that emerged was how quickly a sense of closeness and depth had developed within our meeting community.

After a strong start in our first year, we hope to continue our momentum, with a focus on warmly welcoming those who seek us out, while nurturing a closeness and trust among us that leads to a deepening experience of worship together.

Richelle Ogle
on behalf of St. Augustine Friends Worship Group
Saint Petersburg Monthly Meeting
2019 Spiritual State of the Meeting Report

Introduction
We are a fairly sizeable Meeting. Our attendance in winter, when our winter visitors are present, is 35-45. Yet we are very active; most of us sit on more than one committee, and occasionally 3!

In January we felt blessed to host the FGC Executive Committee Winter Business Meeting; a dozen of our members took advantage of the presence of these wonderful folks to sit in on the meetings. FGC also provided us with a valuable workshop on Dealing with Conflicts and Misunderstandings.

Memberships
- Bob Brooks asked to have membership transferred to Tampa Meeting. We did so with great regret.
- Vicki and Bill Carlie asked to transfer their membership from the Orlando Monthly Meeting to the St. Petersburg Monthly Meeting, and we joyously welcomed them.

Losses
Louise and Andy Reeves lost son Keith.

Southeastern Yearly Meeting
Our member Susan Wade was hired as Administrative Secretary for SEYM.

Care and Counsel
This committee has placed a special emphasis on addressing the pastoral needs of individual members as required. As a part of each of our regular meetings we review the membership to identify any individuals we thought might be in such need
- We provided both spiritual and logistical support to a single mother with MS and her teenage son.
- We have been delighted to offer scholarships to Friends who would like to attend gatherings of SEYM and the wider Quaker world.
- We have reviewed and approved the transfer of membership of two beloved Friends who have relocated from Orlando to St. Petersburg. Additionally, we were happy to assist a Friend seeking membership with the formation of a clearness committee and advice on way forward. We have been excited to recommend membership to the Meeting for this Friend.
- Recently we received a letter from an inmate seeking correspondence. We had a conversation about prison ministry. Two of our members offered to write to the inmate and share letters and responses with the committee.
- We put in place a naming committee which is responsible for naming the nominating committee who then fills our committee slots. At Meeting’s direction, we then changed the process of nomination by removing the naming committee for this coming year, and opening the process for Friends who would like to volunteer to serve on the nominating committee.
- We suggested that working in conjunction with Worship and Ministry and the current Nominating committee we draft some sample scripts that Friends may use in future nominating process. These scripts would include things a Friends might say to another Friend who has expressed concern about others who might serve on that committee.
- We plan to hold an educational session in conjunction with Worship & Ministry to review with Members and Attenders what responsibilities Meeting asks of them. We feel it important to
stress that everyone has some gift they bring to Meeting and want to encourage everyone to share as they are able.

- We suggested that there be a workshop for incoming clerks of committees outlining what their role is and what expectations Meeting has of them.

**Communications Committee**
Meeting decided at end of 2019 to create a Communications Committee. They will begin to meet in 2020 and take over some of what Outreach was doing, as well as focus on social media and networking.

**Events**
Under the leadership of one of our members, we began hosting a series of arts events consistent with our Testimonies that drew people into the Meetinghouse: two concerts, an assertion skills workshop, and a presentation of a play on 4 years in the life of Maya Angelou written by our member, Gwen Brown. There will be more concerts to come in 2020, as a nearby church has lost leadership of their concert series and handed it over to us. This has become a great way to let people know about SPMM and Quakerism. *It has also provided our Meeting with a way to introduce our friends to Meeting in a fun and different way!*

**Hospitality Committee**
The Hospitality Committee prepares the Meetinghouse each week for First Day. In addition, it prepares and provides food for any other events at the Meetinghouse. This committee feels it is very well supported and appreciated by the meeting.

**Librarian**
Under the leadership of our Librarian, our library is being catalogued.

**146 Committee**
- In 2019 the 146 Committee received the final architectural plans for this property, ready for permitting. It also met with the St. Petersburg Fire Marshall and obtained permission to install a residential (rather than commercial) fire suppression system for the residence planned for the property at 146 19th Avenue Southeast. This will amount to a significant savings not only during construction but in the coming years.
- As the year comes to a close, once again the Meeting has expressed a concern as to whether a new residence should be built on the site and this question remains open until bids come in. At that point we will know what is financially feasible and the issue may become moot.
- The Meeting is certain that the old cottage should be torn down and to that end the clerk of the committee met with a contractor who is willing to raze the old building and reconstruct the wall connecting to the Peace Room. As the year closed, the committee had yet to receive an estimate from the contractor for this work.

**Outreach**
At the end of 2019, the Meeting decided to combine the activities of the Outreach Committee with Peace and Social Concerns, since much of it overlapped, and to create a Communications Committee for handling of media concerns.

Throughout 2019, the Outreach committee: created, updated and reproduced a trifold introductory brochure to the St. Petersburg Meeting; a new, revised St. Petersburg-specific handout for each of our booth presentations; and continuously inventoried and reordered our sales materials that were available at events and on the Outreach sales table in the Meeting House.
Outreach Committee participated in:

- The Martin Luther King Celebration with new signs for the Quaker Contingent of 8 that marched, carried a banner and rode in our decorated van in the Martin Luther King parade. We set up and staffed the St. Petersburg Quaker Outreach Tent at the Family Fun and Service Day Festival associated with the parade and sold bumper stickers and pins consistent with our Testimonies. In the Days before the MLK Day March, a member of the Outreach Committee helped organize the Interfaith Worship Service at Temple B’nai Israel Synagogue, and a member of our Meeting was one of the speakers.
- Peace, Love and Pride Festival in Gulfport sharing literature on our Testimony of Equality.
- James Weldon Johnson Literacy Festival sharing new literature on anti-racism and literacy.
- At the St. Petersburg Earth Day Festival, we distributed copies of the Earthcare Witness newsletter and an Eco-Justice/ Social Justice Brochure with local information inserted.
- At the SEYM Gathering in April we had a table displaying a sampling of our booth materials: bumper stickers and buttons, rainbow socks and prayer flags and samples of our committee-created handouts on various testimonies.
- Participated in the St. Petersburg Mother’s Day March focusing on immigrant rights and child incarceration.
- Participated in the St. Pete Good with Me Festival where we had a fan-making table and a joint art project with the Women’s Caucus for Art.

Outreach Committee created:

- A Valentine’s Day Card Making party.
- Ran the St Petersburg Friends Annual Yard Sale 3/30/19. We attracted over 500 people.
- Worked with a computer specialist to rework and update the St. Petersburg website, a task that will continue until it was taken over in January 2020 by a newly formed Media Committee.
- Holiday Wreath Making Workshop
- A sales table with updated and reprinted brochures at the 10/13/19 Peace and Social Concerns Committee Dinner and the 10/19/19 George Lakey Activist Training Presentation.

Peace and Social Concerns
The committee’s 2019 accomplishments include a Food Drive for the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day of Service; a Sound Traveler Concert help us raise funds to support American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) and its work on our southern border and assistance provided to migrants in caravans coming to the US border; the presentation of a film “This Is Home” following the lives of Muslim immigrant families for two years, from the time they arrived in Baltimore, MD. The screening was presented at Allendale UM Church with co-sponsorship from South St. Pete Democratic Club and was open to the public. Our guest speaker was from the Muslim community.

Meeting discussed and was led to support:

- The Green New Deal
- The Community Remembrance Project Coalition
- School of the Americas Watch
- One Community Grocery Co-op in South St. Petersburg
- Tenants Rights in St. Petersburg
- Restoration of Rights (Amendment 4) to felons
- Reverend Andy Oliver of Allendale United Methodist Church in his struggle to continue to minister to persons who are LGBTQ in the same way as anyone else.
Committee and Meeting were led to participate in public demonstrations and marches. This Meeting is fortunate to have an artist that provides materials, workspace and guidance to others in creating banners and signs for ourselves and other participants in a number of public events, including:
1. St. Petersburg Gay Pride Street Festival and Parade
2. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day Parade (St. Petersburg)
3. Climate Strike
4. Homestead watch and

Long Term Activities:
- Immigrant Support – At the suggestion of the this Committee, the Meeting decided that its contribution to the immigration issue would be supporting the legal fees of one person facing deportation. With help from local advocates, she obtained an attorney who would help her gain asylum in this country. His fee was $3,000. The individual gifts of Friends and this Committee’s fundraising have raised more that $2,000 toward those expenses. We anticipate that this effort will continue in 2020.
- Single Use Plastics – This Committee proposed and the Meeting has agreed to encourage those who use the Meetinghouse and our members not to use single-use plastics on this campus.
- Cornering – This weekly demonstration on local street corners involves Quakers and other like-minded individuals who spend two hours a week showing signs as motorists pass
- Garage Sale - We have been assisting the Meeting with this fundraiser for several years. It is always held in conjunction with the Old Southeast Neighborhood Yard Sale during which residents on all the streets in the neighborhood are selling items. We have traditionally provided coffee, drinks, baked goods, restrooms, as well as all kinds of items for sale.
- Feeding People Without Homes - This Meeting helped to originate a nonprofit that now serves 3 hot meals a week to unhoused folks in our community. Friends have continued over the years to also collect and distribute clothing and hygiene items every Friday night during one of those meals. As time has evolved, this volunteer effort continues, but with only one of our Meeting members, who is now cutting hair for unhoused folks at the Friday Nite Dinner, and sits on the group's board.

Financial Contributions the Meeting has made via Peace and Social Concerns:
1. American Friends Service Committee
2. Radiant Hands
3. Allendale United Methodist Church
4. Florida Wildlife Federation
5. Sea Turtle Conservancy
6. School of the Americas Watch (SOA Watch)
7. A. Zepeda Legal Fund
8. Family Resources (LGBTQ Safe Spaces) housing for LGBTQ youth

ProNica
Our Meeting celebrates all the accomplishments of ProNica. It has been a blessing for us to host the international office of the nonprofit. ProNica’s intention was to lay down the North American 501(c)3 by December 2019; however due to delays with the NGO closure in Nicaragua and the conflict within the country obstructing the sales and transfers of Quaker House and El Centro (our office in Managua), we felt it in our best interests and those of our partner organizations to remain open until both matters could be resolved. December 31, 2019, brought no resolution to either of the issues; consequently, for this remaining fiscal year ending May 31, 2020, we will continue in our active status as we wait to resolve the outstanding concerns. In the meantime, ProNica is undergoing an archival process in which the files are
Property Committee
Our work this past year oversaw many regular maintenance projects, as well as the replacement of both 5-ton A/C compressors in the attic of the Meetinghouse and the replacement of all the windows and exterior doors in the Annex and one window in the Meetinghouse kitchen. The committee also began a long-term landscape project to address the aesthetics of both the Meetinghouse and adjoining 146 (cottage) properties.

Rental Committee
The Meetinghouse seems to be gaining a reputation as a good place for small workshops and events, and the committee encourages everyone to suggest the Meetinghouse as a venue for any appropriate event they may learn about. It continues to host voting, and large community meetings and weekly workshops.

Worship and Ministry
We are thankful that our committee has been able to sustain itself and faithfully continue the work as we have each traveled and dealt with other personal matters. We have sought to provide opportunities for F/Friends to gather together and explore our relationships with each other and with Spirit, including a “How does Spirit Go with Thee?” monthly query in Adult First Day School (AFDS).
- We regularly have between 25 and 35 people in attendance at Meeting for Worship, and 10-20 for Adult First Day School for Learning.
- A committee member offers a warm welcome to arrivals before silent worship.
- Our Meeting Clerk invites guests to introduce themselves and sign the Visitor’s Guestbook, and to join us for hospitality, AFDS, committee meetings, and other events.
- The rest of us try to stay mindful of welcoming folks at rise of Meeting and socializing afterwards.
- A committee member follows up with written notes or email, depending on the information available.
- Joys, sorrows, and requests for prayer or being held in the Light is part of the Meeting for Worship after silent worship.
- Committee members, collectively and separately, hold individuals and the Meeting, and people and situations in the world as a whole, in the Light.
- One popular monthly event is the “Friends Cafe,” a potluck dinner based on the delicious soups and desserts brought by two of our members, followed by our separate Men’s and Women’s Groups. This has grown over the years and continues to nurture our relationships and communal growth. We can count on an attendance of 16-24 persons.
- Worship etiquette took much of our attention and discernment on how to best increase consciousness of how we communicate with each other in all settings: Adult First Day School, Meeting for Worship, Committee Meetings, and Meeting for Worship with a Concern for Business.
- Worship and Ministry hosted a regional Quaker EarthCare Witness (QEW) workshop in November. It was well attended and had personal impact. The group focused not only on the crucial changes that must be made for our environment to remain hospitable, but on the thoughts and feelings that are rising to the surface as we become more aware of the magnitude of the issues. We are grateful for the support given by many in our community and to Mary Jo Klingel, national clerk for QEW, and Beverly Ward, SEYM Field Secretary for Earthcare and member of the “Bohn Jeverly” theatrical duo, for offering a rich, multifaceted, and meaningful experience.
Finally, books and pamphlets purchased from Friends General Conference and Pendle Hill were thoughtfully chosen to reflect our commitment to Earth care and Quaker process and to increase our awareness of our differences and that which we hold in common. The funds for the books and pamphlets were a generous gift from an anonymous donor.

**Youth First Day School**

Our Meeting has had no YFDS since two of our families moved away this year. In April we discussed our current dearth of children. This evolved into a decision to form a working group on Parenting Workshops, comprising several committee clerks and led by the Peace and Social Concerns Committee Clerk. (If we attracted parents to a secular workshop, we might draw their children to attend YFDS.) We planned a two-hour "Brainstorming Session for Activists" on August 24. The idea of a sizeable group of kids going off to the children’ room and coming out having had a really good time around activities reflecting Quaker values, many or most of which would be shared by this group of activist parents, seemed a healthy start. As it evolved, we could not gather enough participants to hold the workshop. We remain “childless”. General ideas going forward:

- Convene the Working Group again.
- Invite Kody Hersh, SEYM Youth & Young Adult Coordinator, to brainstorm with us.
- Provide child abuse prevention training to interested parties.
- Add “Child Care Provided” to our Meeting sign.

**Summary**

Our Meeting is happily busy. We’ve reinvented some of our committee work, and continue to struggle with the (we’ve heard) same issues many Meetings have. We try hard to listen deeply, and cherish and support each other through those struggles. We feel intense gratitude for those of us who come together each First Day for worship and fellowship and who provide the labor and love that keeps us going.

Linda Morganstein
Clerk of the Meeting
Sarasota Monthly Meeting
2019 Spiritual State of the Meeting Report

Sarasota sits on the Gulf of Mexico. It is not surprising that we are subject to tides, but ours are seasonal rather than daily. In late fall and winter, we have an incoming tide when our weekly attendance doubles with the arrival of winter residents. The arrivals are a mix of Friends we know well, who make their home in our area for part of every year, and one-time or occasional visiting vacationers. In late spring, these Friends head north, and we return to our baseline of 20 or so year-round worshipers. While we joyfully welcome our seasonal residents and visitors, the flow creates an instability in the Meeting. In the summer, we struggle to keep our small committees functioning and find we do not have the numbers or the energy to accomplish all we might wish to do. In winter, we are grateful to be more numerous and are exploring how to be more of a presence in the community. This year we have been pleased to welcome many young seekers exploring Friends worship for the first time. One of these young, new attenders has become a committee member and is active in outreach to young adults in the area.

Over the past year, vocal ministry has become less frequent yet often briefer, deeper, and more direct. A longtime Friend summarized our Meeting’s current approach to vocal ministry this way: “When people feel called by the Lord, they should speak, but not add their own interpretations. Only those messages that seem to come from outside oneself should be spoken in Meeting. Discussion of messages should occur after the rise of Meeting.” Another mentioned that she “finds hope in the Meeting’s generosity of spirit.” Many comment on the gathered and nourishing atmosphere in our Meetings for Worship. Many say they feel supported by Friends’ presence and prayers.

Like other Meetings in places popular with retirees, we are an older Meeting. Average age on a typical Sunday is about 70. Correspondingly, we have members with serious medical conditions. In the past year, we experienced the deaths of one member and of another worshiper’s spouse. One member asked to have her membership, and those of her children, laid down. Several members, including a well-loved longtime member, became too disabled to attend Meeting. Two of our families most seriously affected by chronic illness have young children with life threatening conditions. We work to support these families in the specific ways requested by each, with prayer, holding in the Light, connecting them to other Friends Meetings when out of town medical care is required, and practical help with food and holiday gifts. In these cases and others, telephone and email support have been important tools.

The Meeting’s outreach within the Sarasota area this year included ongoing attendance at support vigils for the Islamic Center of Sarasota and Bradenton during their prayer services, ongoing commitment to the Coalition of Immokalee Workers, and participation in activities to protest gun violence. We were pleased to host the summer 2019 Southeastern Yearly Meeting Young Adults’ weekend retreat.

We have had hourlong after-Meeting adult education sessions once in most months. Most of these sessions were coordinated and facilitated by Friends from our own Meeting. A highlight of adult education in 2019 was an intensive all day workshop, “Introduction to Quakerism”. As an expression of our testimony on equality, we have made Meetinghouse restrooms non-gender specific with “all-gender” signage.

Our Meeting faces an ongoing challenge with uninvited people sleeping on our grounds and on the Meetinghouse porches. Attempts at friendly resolution have not always been successful; there has been recurrent vandalism. We continue to search for Friendly ways to address this.
In developing the social life of the Meeting, we try to balance the health constraints of older members who do not drive after dark with the time limitations of those who work full time. The former monthly Men’s Lunch has become the All Friends Lunch, with a small but enthusiastic following. Much more widely attended are our monthly potluck lunches and monthly goodie bakes by the Quaker Bakers, creative young Friends led by imaginative adults.

As we move into 2020 and beyond, we are heartened and encouraged by all those who are active in our Meeting, both in worship and in support of our Meeting community.

Dave Hilsheimer
Clerk of the Meeting
Savannah Friends Meeting
2019 Spiritual State of the Meeting Report

Savannah Friends Meeting now enjoys our second year residing at the Joy Cottage of Wesley Oak United Methodist Church.

The Meeting typically hosts an average of 8 participants during worship time; we have 9 members, 8 attenders, and continue to benefit visits by Quaker travelers, visitors, and tourists. Hollyn Greene and Manius Sultan, who began attending last year, have now become weekly attenders and bring a refreshing and energized spirit for advocacy work.

Our Peace & Social Action committee was started this past year by Hollyn Greene. Hollyn has been proactive in exploring various outreach initiatives in Savannah – an interfaith addictions coalition, refugee efforts, and the climate change movement, to name a few. The PSA committee is educating our Meeting on these important and pressing concerns, helping members and attenders to become active in areas if they feel called to do so. The PSA committee also represents our Meeting to FCNL.

Our Worship and Ministry Committee meets monthly and takes on much of the work of the Meeting, such as organizing the Religious Education schedule; maintaining our list of members and attenders; providing outreach to those who are not able to attend or are no longer active; and facilitating and/or encouraging study groups and social gatherings.

Our Religious Education program has been well attended; a member or attender makes a presentation on a Quaker-related topic that is followed by discussion. On the second First Day of each month we have a “Sharing Group” session that may center on any topic of interest to a member or attender.

Our neighbors in nearby Bluffton, South Carolina, hold Worship for Meeting once every month or so. This past year they met with us to explore the possibility of becoming a formal Worship Group under the care of Savannah Friends Meeting. Our Meeting fully supports this initiative as they continue to consider this possibility. Some of the group’s attenders periodically attend Savannah Friends Meeting.

Members and attenders continue to share in fellowship outside of Meeting. Some meet for brunch prior to Meeting for Business; periodically we gather in the homes of members and enjoy fellowship and a potluck meal together.

Finally, our Business Meetings have been well attended as we discuss our finances and the direction of the Meeting to ensure its fiscal viability. Fortunately, we have been able to continue with our annual contributions to several local charities: Penn Center, Loop it Up, and Quaker House.

Submitted by John Harris/Clerk, with contributions from Tracey Dolan, Jessica Binkley, and Lary Jones.

John Harris
Clerk of the Meeting
Tallahassee Monthly Meeting
2019 Spiritual State of the Meeting Report

Tallahassee Friends gathered in worship sharing in November to consider queries on the spiritual state of our Meeting. Friends and attenders this year experienced the nurture and guidance of the Spirit within our Meeting community in a variety of ways. We came together to experience God’s presence and learn to live that presence beyond the walls of our meetinghouse. We were called to look carefully at what it means to “answer that of God in everyone” as individuals, and also corporately as a Meeting community. For the most part, we have experienced vocal ministry as less moralistic or instructive than previously and more often rising from and contributing to the deepening of worship. We faced painful challenges and continue to grow and heal as a result. We rejoiced that many Friends and attenders have found comfort within our community, and at the same time were saddened that some Friends have felt isolated and not found spiritual nurture, support, understanding and appreciation in our midst. Most, but not all of us, have felt strengthened through meeting for worship and the activities in which we engage. It continues to be a deep sorrow that some Friends have felt unable to return to our Meeting because of a major challenge we faced, addressed and continue to learn from. We seek to discover how better to deepen our meetings for worship, listen, respond and express gratitude for the gifts people bring to our Meeting.

We had the joy of welcoming Victoria “Vikki” Elizabeth Tranor Woodward as a new Member.

In the summer, we were delighted to take under our care the marriage of a Young Adult Member, Jessamyn Doan, who grew up in our Meeting. The wedding arrangements committee enjoyed traveling to the bride’s grandparents’ farm in Pennsylvania where her wedding to Stephen Ewing was held in good order and with spiritual enthusiasm. In the fall, we were thrilled that a Young Adult Member, Hope Bastian, who also grew up in our Meeting, attended Meeting with her spouse Dachelys Valdes and their son Paulo around the time of his birth, before returning home.

We have had very few youth attend our Meeting and we seek to find ways to become more inviting for young people, people of color and others in our community.

We profoundly grieved the death and celebrated the life of our beloved Meeting friend Ann Blake, wife of Ian MacDonald and mother of Basil Blake and Colin MacDonald. Ian and Basil are both Members of the Meeting. We found comfort and a deepened sense of community in our intimate visits with the family and in sharing her memorial service with other groups at the school where she had taught. We were saddened by the death of Archie Wilcox, the elderly father of our Member Christie Wilcox Lamm, who attended as best he could while visiting from the west coast and very much enjoyed the potluck dinners. We recently received word of the death of our Member John P. “Jack” Sisson, who was very active in the Meeting until he moved away to live in a continuing-care facility near his daughter. We remember with love his persistent and effective volunteer work on understanding traumatic brain injury, his many years of passionate work for civil rights, and his caring presence in our meetings. These deaths each reminded us of the need to re-visit the Meeting’s program of preparation for dying and death, and to keep loving concern for each of the members of our beloved community.

The major challenge that drew us deeply into prayer for God’s guidance was how to address the individual needs of a meeting Member who brought gifts to our Meeting and, at the same time, inadvertently brought pain to individuals and the Meeting as a whole through various opinions and statements. We spent several months, under the leadership of the Worship, Ministry and Oversight Committee, learning the importance of not letting the desire to tend to the needs of an individual lead us to ignore the needs of
our religious community as a whole. We were led to seek guidance both within and beyond our Meeting from other Friends – within SEYM, other Yearly Meetings, Friends Journal articles, Friends General Conference website publications, and Nonviolent Communication workshops. We all struggled together. We eventually lovingly and with integrity required the Member to stay away from Tallahassee Meeting for two years, and set forth a process for the Member possibly returning afterwards. We are continuing to explore ways to prevent and address similar situations sooner, should they arise in the future, with love as the first motion.

We have sincerely loved, and acknowledged the challenges of living that love as Quakers, learning patience with Friendly processes. We have cared for Friends with needs within our Meeting as best we could, always with room for improvement. Our prison visitation program through the Worship Group at Marianna Federal Correctional Institution was laid down when the FCI was closed in 2018 after Hurricane Michael, but a prison correspondence, visitation, and Christmas cards ministry to some inmates continues, including those on death row. One member of our Peace and Social Concerns Committee was, and continues to be, consistently, persistently and faithfully active with Moms Demand Action/Everytown for Gun Safety, striving to reduce gun violence – an ongoing Meeting concern.

Our deep concern for the Earth led us to compose our *Faith Statement on Climate Change*, which a Friend then illustrated in brightly colored scenes before it was posted outside the entrance to our meetinghouse. We tried unsuccessfully to publish it in the Tallahassee Democrat newspaper, and will share it with our wider community in other ways. In an attempt to deepen the spiritual life of our Meeting, we held three small Spiritual Companion Groups, following SEYM’s Spiritual Formation Program. As a result, one group member was moved to work for a year with Quaker Voluntary Service. We support a Young Adult Member in his volunteer efforts with FCNL, and twenty people (including three from the wider community) attended an FCNL Advocacy Team Training Program at our meetinghouse. Five members of our Meeting formed a Team which made a visit to the offices of two Congressional Representatives, asking for their support for repealing the 2001 and 2002 “Authorization for Use of Military Force” amendments to the National Defense Appropriations Act, but afterwards the Team was laid down because it was too small to sustain action. Over thirty people, mostly from our Meeting, attended our hosting of George Lakey’s “How We Win” workshop on nonviolent direct-action campaigning. We faithfully and from the spiritual Well support a residential facility associated with Apalachee Mental Health by annual contributions to meet some of the needs of its residents. We are grateful to have a liaison from our meeting work with the wider Tallahassee community in the Community Remembrance Project, which is part of the Equal Justice Initiative’s work striving for acknowledgment of communities’ responsibility for lynchings, recognizing and honoring the humanity and individuality of the victims, and seeking to increase healing of all in the community.

We are grateful to be learning more about what it means to be faithful both individually and as a community.

Phoebe Biers Andersen
Clerk of the Meeting

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The following five queries were considered in worship sharing, and further discernment to include comments from Friends not attending the worship sharing yielded this report.

1) In what ways has the meeting for worship nurtured my spiritual growth? What has been a challenge for me in meeting for worship?
2] In what ways have meeting for worship with a concern for business, committee participation, and other meeting activities both nurtured and challenged my spiritual growth?

3] In what ways have we experienced Tallahassee Monthly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends as a beloved community in the past year?
   -- In what ways could we deepen our support for one another?
   -- In what ways have we supported our youth in the life of our Meeting?
   -- In what ways might we deepen our support of our youth within our community?

4] What was our meeting’s witness to the wider community in the last year?

5] What am I seeking when I enter into the life of Tallahassee Monthly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends? What have I found so far? What has been missing for me?