

Cincinnati Friends Meeting State of Society Report for 2016

For this year's State of Society Report, Wilmington Yearly Meeting poses queries related to the theme of the 2017 Yearly Meeting: "Who do you say I am?," reflecting both Jesus' inquiry in Matthew 16:15, and "What canst thou say?," from the journals of George Fox and Margaret Fell.

How is the life of your meeting and personal experiences rooted in the life of Christ?

Many of our members and attenders experience their strongest connection to God through Meeting for Worship. Since our new Minister, Jim Newby, joined us in April, he has encouraged us to be tender with one another, and challenges us to open our hearts. In this way—in loving God and in loving our neighbors as ourselves—our Meeting's and our personal experiences remain rooted in the life of Christ.

What are the messages your meeting endeavors to bring to members, attenders, and the community?

Throughout the year, our Meeting has endeavored to bring messages of love as well as bearing witness to the Quaker testimonies of simplicity, peace, integrity, community, and equality.

We continue to live out our faith as an open and affirming community, welcoming all persons into the life of our fellowship. We take seriously our Quaker testimony on community and encourage members and attenders to share their joys and concerns with us at the end of each worship service. We continue to engage in discussions regarding Meeting autonomy.

Another message we share is our concern for the stewardship of the Earth. The Peace & Social Concerns Committee continues to focus on the issue of climate change, and has conducted several presentations on how we can all become more involved in saving our planet. In support of these efforts, the Trustees replaced all of the light bulbs in the meetinghouse with more energy-efficient ones, and installed motion-sensitive lights in the restrooms to minimize electrical usage. We have also begun exploring alternative energy sources for our meetinghouse, such as solar and geothermal solutions.

This year our Meeting became a member of the AMOS Project, a group of more than 50 local congregations that work together on such issues as childhood poverty and social justice. Our involvement in and support of this organization communicates a message of commitment to these values and concerns.

How does your meeting encourage members or attenders to experience the living Christ directly?

We encourage one another to experience God directly through both our teachings and the actions that we undertake as a community.

A number of members and attenders regularly attend the "Centering Down" discussion group before worship, exploring such texts as queries from various editions of *Faith and Practice* and passages from the Minister's message for the day. This group provides an opportunity for deep reflection and spiritual growth, for listening to one another and sharing what measure of Light we have with one another.

Our Meeting also continues to offer Spiritual Nurture Groups to help our members and attenders learn from one another and develop their own gifts. These groups have included a *Prayer Shawl* group that knits and crochets items for those in need, as well as classes on *How Our Christian Testament Came to Be*, *Everyday Mysticism*, *The Gnostic Gospels*, and a *Tao Study Group*. Our Minister, Jim Newby, also facilitated two six-week Quakerism 101 courses, which individuals are required to complete prior to requesting membership. This year we received two new members into our faith community (one adult and one Junior Member).

Our First-Day School also encourages our young Friends to experience the Spirit directly. As part of their continuing study of the Quaker testimonies, our youth helped nurture our community by sponsoring a game night where adults and young people enjoyed many playful interactions. Their study of the testimony of equality led to their assuming responsibility for the Meeting's Equal Exchange Store, a worker-owned fair-trade cooperative. Our young Friends have attended the business meeting, and we support their various outreach projects. As an example, we supported one young Friend in a bike ride across the United States in support of Multiple Sclerosis research.

We have also helped some of our members to experience our love for them through our support for their higher education. The Clerk of Ministry & Counsel wrote a letter recommending one member for the Thomas Mullen Scholarship at the Earlham School of Religion, which he received. Our Scholarship Committee was also pleased to be able to bestow one of our young Friends with a scholarship to assist her studies at Kent State University.

Our Peace & Social Concerns Committee also encourages us to experience the Divine Presence directly through service. In addition to ongoing projects such as collecting food for the Freestore/Foodbank and box tops, labels, and stamps for Quaker Missions West, our Meeting supported a local agency which houses and supports abused women and their children by taking them many buckets filled with cleaning supplies just before Christmas. (The residents there need these items when they leave the shelter and take up residence on their own.) Recalling Jesus' teaching that what we do for the least of these, we do for Him, Cincinnati Friends also continue to serve meals at an organization that serves homeless adults with mental illnesses.

Approved by Cincinnati Monthly Meeting
3/12/2017