

State of the Meeting Report: April 1988  
Bloomington-Normal Monthly Meeting of Friends

Bloomington-Normal meeting has experienced a year of quiet growth and change. Our meetings for worship have been varied. Some are entirely silent, while others are rich with messages. Many members think that "we are in better spiritual shape;" others look for a different type of spiritual experience, which we seem unable to provide. We continue to enjoy the warmth of meeting in each others' homes, but are keenly aware of the limitations this arrangement entails. If we should become too successful at outreach, most of our homes will be too small for meeting. At the same time, we are aware that the loss of even one family can diminish our numbers significantly. One member says, "A meeting of this size teeters on the edge of growth or extinction."

For instance, Phillip and Cheryl Young and their children left Normal in December to pursue new opportunities in Port Angeles, Washington. While we miss them, we are happy that they seem to be thriving in their new community.

However, we have happily welcomed new members and attenders into our group: Beth and Paul Schobernd and their boys are Macomb's loss and our gain; Emily Dunn Dale, a long-time Friend, has become active in our meeting; new attender Dana Dooley has joined us often for worship. We have had visits from other seekers, one of whom has made a return visit. We appreciate the vitality the visits have added to our meeting. With our complex schedule of "big" and "small" meetings at different homes, we are not as prepared as we would like to be to welcome visitors properly--either with Friendly information flyers or with an easily predictable location for the next meeting; we hope that visitors feel welcomed into our group nevertheless.

Because some of our homes are too small to contain meeting and two Sunday School classes, we continue to have Sunday School on first, third, and fifth Sundays only. We no longer have Sunday School for our teens, but we are trying a new class configuration for the younger children.

Other activities together have enriched the life of the meeting. We have held two sharing sessions on the environmental concerns raised by IYM. We have begun a series of discussions on Quaker history and beliefs, with guidance from the "Quakerism 101" syllabi provided by Philadelphia Yearly Meeting.

Finally, meeting has established a committee of clearness and support for Nathan Treadway, who is confronting the issue of military registration as he reaches his eighteenth birthday. After one meeting with the committee, Nathan has gained some new perspectives, and the rest of us have gained a heightened awareness of how we influence our children as they grow up.

4/23/88



State of Society Report, 1987-88

St. Louis Religious Society of Friends  
St. Louis MO

We've had another year of growing closer through worship, common efforts to meet the needs of others around the world, shared affection and fun, continued conversation about differences, and mutual support in our sorrows and happiness.

We held memorial services for two dear friends, Karol Rekas and Rachel Stalnaker.

The number of children in our meeting continues to increase, to our great joy. We welcomed eight new babies last year and three this year. Our newest arrivals are David Christopher Sachs, son of Judy and Dwain Sachs; Maggie Mulongo, daughter of Mufata and Rebecca Mulongo; and Benjamin Mullan Boyles, son of Diane Mullan Boyles and David Boyles.

We welcomed new members Gail Roberts, Melissa Meyer, Sonja Launspach, Diane Mullan Boyles and Stefan Boyles. Margaret Katranides transferred membership from Durham, North Carolina, and Gale Toko transferred membership from University Meeting in Seattle, Washington.

The meeting approved and happily agreed to oversee the marriage of Steve Rekas and Linda Armstrong, and the marriage of Margaret Katranides and Harry Desroches.

We had several programs and activities which fostered our spiritual growth. The Advancement Committee sponsored "Friendly Dozens" on a number of selected topics such as "Friends' History" and "Spiritual Paths", for the purpose of small group discussions and learning. The Advancement Committee also presented our fall retreat, held at Camp Tambo, on the subject of community. Our spring retreat, sponsored jointly by the Advancement Committee and the Ministry and Caring Committee, was held at the Thompson Center. Douglas Gwynn, author of Apocalypse of the Word: The Life and Message of George Fox, presented the program, speaking about early Friends' history and the apocalyptic core of Fox's understanding of Christ.

With the increase in our birth rate, we have felt an even stronger impetus than ever to involve children meaningfully in our community and at the same time to be responsive to members who find children's noise disruptive at meetings for worship. We have had three forums on child-related topics. We have experimented with two "Children and Adult" meetings for worship, which consisted of singing, followed by silent worship, followed by games. We will continue discussion and new programs in connection with this issue.

Teen Friends participated in two retreats. Three teens attended

the "Quake" in Chicago on January 1-3 sponsored by the IYM Youth Oversight Committee. More recently, in March, the teens had their own retreat during the week-end of the adult spring retreat. In First Day School, the teens are focusing on the study of Faith and Practice, and discussions of how their Quaker values are challenged.

Our attenders' dinner was a popular event, as usual. For one night during the year, we made a sharp distinction between members and attenders; members enjoyed preparing a meal for attenders, and the latter had the fun of being pampered. Afterwards, three members spoke movingly about the meaning The Society of Friends has for them and then answered questions from the audience.

CONCERNS,

We continued to work on social issues like gun control, prison ~~reform~~, prevention of hunger, rehabilitation of criminal offenders, conflict resolution, support for refugees, provision of information about alternatives to military service, work for AFSC, and fund raising for Friends organizations.

The annual Easter breakfast and the annual Christmas sale for service each combined the use of Friends' talents with an opportunity to raise money for Friends' concerns. Two special breakfasts raised funds to relocate a Salvadoran family from a Honduran refugee camp to their former home in El Salvador, and to support Bill Ramsey in going to El Salvador with the Inter-Faith Committee on Accompaniment.

Next on our agenda is Blue River Quarterly. As we write this State of Society Report, we look forward to meeting and sharing with Friends, hearing the news of your year.

Submitted by Leslie Stuart and Ann Nord  
April 10, 1988

4/23/88

AVERAGE ATTENDANCE: 70 TO 80

April 1988

The So. Ill. Meeting meets weekly with child-care provided for our three young children. A 45-min discussion period precedes Mtg. for worship. Attendance averages a little less than a year ago. Some friends have felt a lessening of spiritual depth in their worship experience over the past few months, others have experienced growth related to their Quaker journey. Several attendees have recently expressed interest in becoming members of the Society of Friends.

We are in a period of less energy, perhaps, for sponsoring events which might be growth promoting. We do, however, remain involved in many activities which contribute to Meeting vitality. One member is on the AFSC executive committee. We have formed an environmental concerns committee in response to the IYM concern. We have sought ways to be active in the sanctuary movement, recently having been accepted as a sister church with an existing sanctuary.

This winter a Friend in crisis requested a meeting for worship to focus on her particular need. A group of us gathered for an experience meaningful to all, as we entered a period of silence, followed by word

sharing by the one in need. Each person there in turn shared personal reflections, offering support in his/her own way, all from a non-judgmental attitude. The friend to whom we ministered has expressed on many occasions the deep significance that experience had for her.

We might be more sensitive and more creative in suggesting to persons in need ways in which a meeting might minister to one another.

Rosalee Brown

4/25/88

AVERAGE ATTENDANCE: 7 OR 8



young children. Van Stoecker has first-day school in his home during the early part of our Meeting for Worship. Sometimes one or more of the children will come with him when he joins the Meeting in progress. Children's first-day school is held at

the Stanton's when we meet there.

Three of our people participated in the CROP Walk last fall. Marshall Findley was the top money ~~per~~ raiser of all the walkers.

For several years we have had a community garden for the enjoyment of the residents of a nursing home. This project has ended, now that the nursing home has moved from its previous rural setting into the town of Ralla. Van Stoecker has spearheaded this activity.

Mike McClelland, son of a Quaker family in Quincy, IL, attended our meeting while a student at University of Missouri-Rolla. He is now engaged in a literature ministry with an evangelistic organization and is traveling in Asia. Rolla Meeting, as a gesture of support, has

organization or a  
Rally Meeting, as a gesture of support, has  
made a contribution toward his expenses.

Two of our members keep in contact <sup>with</sup> and  
provide some support for the Cuban refugee  
our Meeting sponsored some years ago. Juan  
is now working as a plumber and attending  
advanced plumbing school in Los Angeles. He  
wants to be self-supporting, but an accident  
on the job incapacitated him for about 6 weeks.

Sometimes the vocal ministry does not seem  
too spiritual in our meeting. However, it has  
been very helpful to me, and to many others  
who have attended.

—George McPherson, Jr.