

Blue River Quarterly Meeting

Held Fourth Month 12, 2014 at Camp CILCA

The meeting opened in silence, with the following Friends present: Barb Harroun (Macomb WG), Erin Taylor (Macomb), Judy Wolicki (Field Secretary), Christina Schulz (Bloomington-Normal MM), Fariba Murray (Bloomington-Normal), Grayce Mesner (Clear Creek MM), Sean Wilner (Macomb), Denice Smith (St. Louis MM), Neil Mesner (Clear Creek), Bobbi Trist (Urbana-Champaign MM), Peter Lasersohn (Urbana-Champaign), Dawn Rubbert (St. Louis).

The Clerk read a quote from Philip Gulley's *Living the Quaker Way*.

The recording clerk being absent, Peter Lasersohn was appointed recording clerk for the day.

Grayce Mesner presented the Treasurer's Report on behalf of Margie Haworth-Davis (attached). The report does not reflect a recently discovered check for \$275.

A concern was raised about the persecution of Gay people in Uganda. We have news of specific individuals who have gone into hiding to avoid mob justice, and who have had their bank accounts frozen, preventing travel out of the country. Contributions are solicited through a crowdsourcing website, GoFundMe.com. In the absence of detailed information about the people who posted this solicitation of funds, and noting that our own treasury is quite limited, a decision on this matter was deferred.

Our next meeting is scheduled for Ninth Month 19–21 at the DuBois Center. Reservations have been made for Fourth Month 17–19, 2015 at Camp CILCA, but there is some possibility that we may be able to switch to Fourth Month 10–12 to avoid scheduling too close to the ILYM Women's Weekend.

Some Friends have reported that our current system for planning quarterly meeting sessions is proving burdensome, especially when meetings with few children are called on to plan the children's program. The possibility was raised of hiring a paid coordinator for the children's program. St. Louis Meeting is responsible for the children's program at our session next fall, and the "small northern meetings" next spring; Friends authorize each group to hire a coordinator for their respective sessions, using Blue River Quarterly funds not to exceed \$500 per session. We will evaluate the success of this plan in one year.

Additional research having been conducted online since our consideration of the Ugandan issue, Friends authorize the donation of \$500 to the Gender Equity and Health Organization — Uganda. The clerk is directed to forward this issue to Illinois Yearly Meeting.

State of Society reports were read from Macomb Worship Group and from Urbana-Champaign, St. Louis, Clear Creek, and Bloomington-Normal Meetings.

The meeting closed in silence.

Spring 2014 State of the Meeting Report – St. Louis Monthly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends

“This is the possession of the saints who dwell in the light that leads them into the life and fountain from whence it comes; here is the unity of the spirit, and bond of peace, which never can be broken.”

–Margaret Fell, “An Epistle to Friends” 1657

Margaret Fell’s words remind us that when we turn to the spirit, the “still small voice” within unites us spiritually and binds us in peace, both with each other and with the world outside of the meetinghouse. Over the past year, St. Louis Friends have sought to fulfill Fell’s words.

We are thankful for the leading to open our meetinghouse once again to our neighbors through the St. Louis Homeless Winter Outreach. This winter of snow and bitter cold has been especially challenging for all. We are glad to offer food and shelter for a third year and blessed by our guests’ reminder that peace and unity come through kindness and care.

Recent challenges also provided spiritual sustenance. When our meetinghouse was broken into, we were grateful for the Friends who responded with skill and good cheer to the buildings’ physical needs. And while we are thankful that the damage was minimal and nothing was taken, we are concerned for the plight of our homeless neighbor who stands to be incarcerated in a penal system that we believe offers little opportunity for penitence or reform.

Our monthly “Burundi Sundays,” allow us to minister to those traumatized by war and poverty through our commitment to the African Great Lakes Initiative of the Friends Peace Teams. These fellowship meals provide Friends the opportunity to contribute financially to the peace-building work of AGLI as well as to learn about the work in Africa. Many Friends continue to expand our ministry to the world seeking a just, environmentally responsible, and economically equitable community. We continue to invite Friends to take part in wider Quaker organizations and activities.

St. Louis Friends have ministered to each other in a number of ways. For a second year, our Spiritual Directions groups have provided a space for Friends to worship together in an open and intimate way. One Friend described Spiritual Directions as leading her to feel that “...there has been a Spiritual strengthening recently and that Friends are more connected as a community.” While some Friends are concerned that at times the vocal ministry in Meeting for Worship inclines to the ideological, overwhelmingly Friends sense that our worship has been more deeply led by the spirit. As one said, “I have felt more frequent sense of a gathered meeting than in some previous years.”

Friends agree that the decision to become a member of a Monthly Meeting is a profoundly personal and spiritual one. Our membership remains consistent and we are grateful for Melissa Breed-Parks’ new membership. Many Friends remarked that a number of our most active and longstanding attenders continue to be essential to the life of the Meeting. Regarding birthright membership, we continue to season the question, though there is broad agreement that

if a family would like their children read into membership as birthright Friends, the Meeting supports this decision. There is some concern with the lack of child attendance at Meeting and Firstday School, especially older children. As one Friend said, “we continue to struggle to find ways to make Meeting and Firstday School meaningful to older school-age Friends.” Finding volunteers to teach Firstday School continues to be a challenge yet we are blessed with the dedicated teachers who devote worship time every week to guiding our youngest Friends. However, we were able to host IYLM’s Fall Quake for Quaker teens at our Meeting House as well as two intergenerational overnights for our St. Louis families.

Throughout the year we sought to make our Meetings for Worship with a Concern for Business more spiritually grounded. To do so, we encourage that spirit-led discussion of issues take place within committees. We reserve our Meeting for Business for committee reports and action items which have first been threshed and seasoned by the appropriate committees. Likewise, we continue our practice of a smooth and quiet transition from Meeting for Worship to Meeting for Business by foregoing introductions and announcements when Meeting for Business is scheduled. Most Friends agree that these adjustments have been effective. One noted, “I have appreciated the effort to make meeting for worship with attention to business based on the spirit.” We continue to strive to find ways to support Friends in the Rolla Preparative Meeting which is under our care. The two hours between us seems insurmountable at times.

The Meeting’s financial state is stable, though we are always concerned about our ability to finance some of our future building needs. This year, we considered installing solar panels as a means to advance our financial and environmental stewardship. Unfortunately the rebate funds available to underwrite this cost ran out, and we continue to explore how we might move forward with this purchase. When our 20 year old water heater failed and we were surprisingly blessed with a \$2000 donation from locally based Nestle-Purina because they knew of our community work as a homeless shelter. Despite its financial costs, we are grateful for our meetinghouse, which provides a home for our corporate worship and fellowship and a place where those amongst us who most need shelter, both physical and spiritual, can seek it in unity and peace.

2014 State of Society Report – Urbana Champaign Friends Meeting

The life of the Spirit generally fares well in Urbana-Champaign Friends Meeting. Worship is rich with silence and contemplation. Many are message-filled. Some are not, but regardless we enjoy the reassuring warmth of the quiet.

Our membership strives to find useful and proper paths for ministry and service. We provide sandwiches to a soup kitchen once a month. Meeting and membership supports prison reforms including opposition to a new county jail, state-level lobbying, giving to the Books for Prisoners program, as well as teaching in the prisons by members through the Educational Justice Project. We maintain an emergency fund for small crisis needs within our broader

community and a recent fundraiser provided funds for the new year. We support an orphan in Africa and immigration reform. The meeting endorses and cosponsors many community events on progressive causes.

For ministry, we orchestrate guidance and clearness committees when requested. We have provided two clearness committees for marriage, including a double wedding in the Meeting House in May. Singing before worship continues though with a waning number of participants. We have had a series of well-attended Question and Answer sessions on Quakerism, sharing our experiences and expectations with newer attenders. Meeting events have included a workshop on Quaker discernment, a presentation on Faith and Place, and a Stone Soup Supper fundraiser. Holiday gatherings, events with talent sharing, cookouts and First Sunday potlucks remain popular. The women of the meeting have initiated a Quaker Women's group. Community time after worship stretches long after rise of worship.

Additional ministry includes some members enjoying monthly silent retreats at the Meeting House where we enjoy silence, worship, a quiet meal and a final session of worship sharing. Meeting encourages travel to greater Quaker gatherings and some have attended Quarterly and Yearly meetings. New attenders, members and visitors have been warmly welcomed. As needs arise, we reach out to help our sick. In April we held memorials for a former member and treasurer as well as for a former attender. We gained one new member.

We continue to be blessed with a general lack of internal conflict, with very smoothly flowing business meetings and cooperative collaboration in our projects.

Religious education has struggled this year. We had a successful weekend campout for the children in summer. The children enjoyed a new care giver most of the year, but unfortunately, she then had to leave us too. Planned first day activities were scarce, but the kids did enjoy planning and performing a play for the stone soup supper. After a called meeting on the children's program, we anticipate adding a programming coordinator in the next months. Despite the lack of active programming, we continue to have a number of children attending. We also look forward to hosting a Youth Quake in May.

The financial health of the Meeting remains acceptable, partly through the growing popularity of the Meeting House rentals. The grounds continue to develop with tended vegetable and flower gardens and the planting of new trees. The library grows and gets regular use. We welcome the use of our building by a small church on Sunday evenings, a separate Buddhist meditation group on Mondays and a Catholic Mass twice a month. Other community groups are using our space regularly for meetings, occasional retreats and even University courses.

The Springfield Worship Group continues under our care.

Clear Creek Monthly Meeting – State of the Meeting Report to Blue River Quarterly, April 2014

One of the most significant events in the past year was when Clear Creek held a spring retreat on May 25 and 26, 2013 with the title of "Spiritual Genograms" led by Judy Wolicki,

ILYM Field Secretary. It helped Friends move to better understanding of one another's points of view (including from the past), and help forge stronger and closer connections between us. It gave us the opportunity to remember many of our past and current spiritual leaders Lucretia Franklin, the Wolf Family, Wilson's, Nelson's, Whitney's, Ashdown's and others who not only showed us how to live our lives, but showed us how life kept going after personal tragedies. We could see that we were better off spiritually today because of our association with them. We continue to have similarly strong people among us and we value each one of them. We also mapped out our own Spiritual Genograms – many of us coming from backgrounds other than this Meeting. We realized how many of us have done “mission work” through work camps, AFSC, FGC, travels, writing history to keep our past alive, fostering children, traveling to different countries and spreading good will, peace work, etc. We thank Judy for doing such a wonderful job of drawing us out, allowing us to see the benefits of the past and the opportunities of the future.

At our October homecoming the Clear Creek youth made a peace pole that we will put up this spring. During the past year we were pleased to welcome into the meeting Barbara Harroun (Macomb Worship Group), Milo Dennis (son of Rose Dennis), Jason Dennis (transfer from Durham Monthly Meeting), and Jason's daughter, Jasmine Dennis (transfer from BNFm). We are now starting to plan for the May 31, 2014 wedding of Beth Schobernd and Duane Carpenter under the care of our meeting.

In November we were saddened to receive a letter from Jeannie Marvin withdrawing from Clear Creek and Quakers. She gave so much to us individually and as a meeting. We thank her for her years of wonderful and meaningful work and said she was always welcome to return in full or just to visit.

In February Rose Dennis took a job as a zoo keeper at Miller Park Zoo that requires her to work on Sundays and she has stepped down as our clerk. Her co-clerk, Michael Dennis, has become clerk and Beth Schobernd has become the co-clerk.

In closing, Clear Creek invites anyone interested to join us in the April 20, 2014 celebration of Easter, including our annual pot luck dinner and the Easter Egg hunt for the kids.

Macomb Worship Group – 2014 State of Society Report

In many ways, it has been a bittersweet year for the Macomb Quakers. We continue to meet for worship faithfully on First Day evenings, and to provide weekly First Day School for our vibrant and active group of five young friends, ages 3 through 10. We've also continued and deepened our relationships within the wider Illinois Yearly Meeting and worked to enact our commitments to social justice, even as our group has been faced with changes both difficult and delightful.

This year, our community lost two of the regular attenders who had been part of our group since the beginning: one who moved out of state and one whose spiritual path led her

elsewhere. These losses are ones that have been felt keenly; we miss the grounding presence and fellowship of both individuals. With only six regular adult attenders throughout most of our group's existence, the reduction to four adults has made us even more aware of our small size. We also lost our beloved First Day School Facilitator this year as her college career here in Macomb came to a close. We sent her off joyfully held in the light for this next chapter of her life, even as her absence has deeply saddened adults and young Friends alike.

Despite these trying losses, our group has also experienced great joy this year. We felt richly honored and grateful to be part of our attender Barbara Harroun's continuing spiritual journey as she became a member of Clear Creek Meeting, under whose care our worship group is warmly held. Barb's deep faith and radiant love is a gift to all of us; she is a calm and steadfast example and a comfort in our darker times. Friends from Clear Creek joined us for worship and fellowship in September and visited again in November to conduct Barb's Clearness Committee. Some of us were able to travel to ILYM Annual Sessions and to the fall meeting of Blue River Quarterly in September and, in October, to help Clear Creek celebrate their homecoming. As always, we greatly enjoyed our annual Christmas Carol sing-along with Spoon River Friends in December, and Spoon River Friends also visited us periodically throughout the year for our potlucks. Finally, we welcomed a wonderful new First Day School Facilitator who has enriched our spiritual lives with her gift of music.

Now going into our fourth year as a worship group, our community continues to feel stronger and more stable, even as we work to make ourselves more visible in the larger Macomb community.