

Clear Creek Monthly Meeting
State of Society Report
2016/2017

Clear Creek Monthly Meeting has had a very quiet year – no major projects, no catastrophes, no serious illnesses, and plenty of deep and satisfying worship. In the midst of it all, in typical Clear Creek fashion, we quietly celebrated our 175th anniversary as a monthly meeting. We did have a celebratory cake when we hosted Continuing Committee in October and we hear there may be some mention of the milestone at annual sessions in June.

To enhance our weekly worship, in October we enjoyed a retreat on the topic of “Decision Making and Conflict Resolution,” led by Field Secretary Judy Wolicki. Our Friendly Circle group continues to meet monthly with Betty Wolf at the Mendota Lutheran Home. In addition, Friendly Circle also organized two outings for the meeting this year. On one day we visited the alpaca farm near Granville and the Dixon Waterfowl Refuge at Hennepin-Hopper Lake. On another day we toured the Miller Park Zoo and the David Davis Mansion in Bloomington. This year, Anne Comisky led our discussion hour only four times instead of monthly as in previous years. Several of us participated in the Blue River Quarterly retreat led by Maurine Pyle and Mariellen Gilpin that took place at Clear Creek house in November.

In memory of our late member, Jim Bumgarner, each year we donate to needy families in Putnam County, typically around Christmas time. This year instead of holding a garage sale (too much work!) to raise money for this purpose, we dropped contributions in a basket and collected \$300 for distribution to two families. We also contributed to the work member Lori Paton and her husband Bob are doing with the Latino community in Peoria.

We continue to be a close-knit community in spite of the distances many of us travel to attend meeting. To extend our time together we eat after meeting every week, calling it by various names – potluck, coffee hour, snacks – but there is always plenty of good food and conversation. This spring we celebrate the 80th birthdays of three of our stalwart members, all within one week. We are preparing to present the Thursday night program at Illinois Yearly Meeting, sharing with Friends the life of a rural meeting.

We always enjoy visitors who come our way for committee meetings, retreats, or just passing through, and encourage you to join us for worship any time.

Urbana-Champaign Friends Meeting

State of Society Report for Blue River Quarterly Meeting, Spring 2017

This year our Meeting has experienced increasing attendance (typically 30-40 adult worshippers) and strong participation in events before and after Meeting for Worship. A twice monthly pre-worship Adult Religious Education discussion group has focused on writings by (and about) Quaker women: Emily Green Balch, Henry J. Cadbury, Kathleen Lonsdale, Fay Honey Knopp, Mary S. Calderone, Florence Kelly, Susan B. Anthony, and Margaret Fell. We discover evidence of their sacrifices to this day. Margaret Hope Bacon's *Mothers of Feminism* (1986) provided context for the ensuing discussions.

In October, Ministry & Oversight hosted a workshop led by Paul Buckley, a Quaker theologian and writer who presented an overview of his research on the early American Friend Elias Hicks. Friends from other central Illinois meetings joined us for worship, potluck, and the afternoon workshop. Inspired by the story of Elias Hicks's spiritual awakening, M&O in February instituted several Spiritual Sharing groups. These groups (each consisting of 6-8 people) are intended to last for several months, and to provide a platform for fellowship to fan the embers of friendship and to foster spiritual awakening.

Post-worship "Quaker Q&A" sessions have taken place thrice yearly for the past five years. Attenders bring their questions about any aspect of Quaker belief or practice; multiple answers and enriching discussion ensue. The Q&A in January was attended by more than two dozen people, ranging from new attenders to long-time members, several with experiences in Friends Meetings elsewhere.

The Peace & Service committee continues its engagement in activities ranging from local to international. Once a month Friends prepare 80 sandwiches and deliver them, with fruit, to the Daily Bread Soup Kitchen, where they are distributed to those who request a meal for later in the day. (DBSK moved to an excellent new Champaign facility in January; they now offer hot lunches seven days a week.) P&S also continues to organize the annual Stone Soup Supper, with proceeds going to replenish Meeting's Emergency Fund. A display of Friends' visual arts and a talent show (which has, in the past, featured poetry readings, music, and magic tricks) take place on the same evening. Another food-related fundraiser is the Pancake Breakfast: the Young and Teen Friends assist with food preparation, and the donations are directed toward a Ugandan student's scholarship.

Building & Grounds committee has planted many native saplings on Meeting property, harking back to the days before the arrival of white settlers, when today's lawn was part of the Big Grove. One of the largest and oldest bur oak trees in today's Champaign County (pre-dating the American Revolution) stands on the eastern edge of our property. The Urbana City Arborist has initiated the process to have it recognized as a Legacy Tree.

Edith Hedges, a long-time member of our Meeting who resided in Charleston IL, died last June. While her family requested no memorial service, a Memorial Minute will be entered in the ILYM Minutes. In February U-C Friends hosted a memorial service for Gene Gilmore, previously a very active

and well-loved member. Although he had transferred his membership to California in retirement, his family requested a service under U-C Friends' care. A memorial service in Marcy commemorated the life of Richard Taber, a life-long Friend and the brother of U-C member Merlin Taber.

An unquestionable highlight of the year has been the development of a more robust program for First Day School. Last autumn we focused on teaching the Young Friends about the various committees and life in the Meeting more generally. In the winter we were joined by a U of I graduate student, who has been working with a Quaker parent to develop a more structured First Day School curriculum. This major step has provided continuity and added zest to the program. The children have reflected upon Meister Eckhart's insight that "Gratitude is the beginning of worship," and they have engaged in crafts projects expressing their ideas about gratitude and contemplation. One parent has said, "I love, love, love the new First Day School program. The girls love it, too. Thank you to Meeting." Our teacher is also working to develop a lively Teen Friends program. He recently hosted a Teen Sunday discussion, offering attendees a chance to voice their goals and ideas. An interest in local immigration issues was identified; perhaps they can work together to identify a community project that will allow each Teen Friend to build a strong connection between the Quaker aspect of his/her life and the many other aspects.

We continue to provide paid child care during each Meeting for Worship and Business Meeting, so parents can attend with that assurance. But now, with a more formal curriculum taking shape, and with regular e-mail "preview announcements" to parents, we have been delighted to see a dramatic increase in children's attendance: from 1-2 to 4-5 in the past, we now are delighted to welcome more typically 6-7, and a high (so far) of 13 Young Friends. Financial investments are associated with this change, of course. But what could be more important than attracting and engaging our Young Friends?

Attendance at Meeting for Worship has grown in recent months, but we need to find ways to encourage more members and attenders to contribute their time, energy, and skills by serving as officers or on committees. In addition, while specific "basket donations" for monthly sandwich making and the Emergency Fund are strong, we must now focus on generating more (and larger) contributions to sustain our property and our activities.

Spoken ministry and attendance have continued to blossom recently, as long-time Friends and new attenders reflect on the openness of the Meeting. There is a shared sense that fear can be left behind and acceptance found within the Meeting's embrace. A growing interest in Quaker values and community seems to have resulted from our nation's current political climate. One college student stated at her first visit, in early November, "This is the first time in a week that I have been among strangers and have felt safe. Thank you."