

Old Chatham Monthly Meeting -State of the Meeting Year of 2011 Report

1. How does ministry thrive in our meetings? How do we identify and support the ministries rising among us? Do we communicate our faith with tenderness and honesty to each other, to our meetings, and to the larger world?
2. Every meeting carries part of the long legacy of Quaker faith and practice. What do we contribute to that legacy? Are we called to participate in non-Quaker movements that express or could use Quaker values?

"How do we identify and support the ministries rising among us?" Our Nominating Committee helps to identify and uplift gifts. Individuals who have leadings have been supported through our Friends' Ministries Fund. Friends have experienced essential support for spiritual callings through the work of Clearness Committees. Fellowship at the rise of Meeting has provided an opportunity to connect people who have similar passions.

Since many of us work outside the Meeting with other organizations that have common beliefs with Quakers, it is inevitable that we communicate to the world our approach through non-violence and Quaker practice. Members of our Meeting contribute monthly to the War Resisters Support Campaign which provides funds for legal representation for U.S. soldiers in Canada who have refused to participate in the Iraq and Afghanistan wars. Meeting Friends are called to express their ministries of peace and non-violence in the fields of mental health, international humanitarian work, and education. Individual members join community peace vigils, work to transform the monetary system, advocate for prisoners, and to conduct the Never Again Campaign which brings Japanese people to live and give talks in the United States on their experiences with Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The Quaker Intentional Village - Canaan continues to be a large focus for several members in our Meeting as it too reaches out to the wider community to increase its membership.

Our Outreach, Peace, and Justice Committee helps communicate our faith and testimonies to the larger world with its free, monthly movie showings. Each film is followed by an often lively discussion which directly engages non-Quakers in conversation with us. The Bob Bacon Memorial Fund, which helps to underwrite the peace and justice work, supported, in 2011, the Young Friends in Residence 2-year pilot program, Alternatives to Violence work in the Bolivian prison system, Women's Action Movement Theater, and the calling of one member to study Nonviolent Communication Mediation.

Many in Meeting attend Yearly Meeting Summer Sessions, serve on Yearly Meeting committees, and this year worked hard hosting Yearly Meeting Fall Sessions in our region. Several of us serve on the Board of Powell House and work actively to support its mission, while some serve on other Quaker bodies such as AFSC and FGC. Meeting Friends contribute articles to Spark, Friends Journal and other publications and we unexpectedly hosted our Fall Regional Meeting this year.

"How do we contribute to the legacy of Quaker faith and practice?" The Meetinghouse we are building is part of our legacy as a Meeting. Completing it is a spiritual focus around which our meeting congregates. The mainstay of our ministry in the past year

has been the volunteer work on our Meetinghouse. People of all ages have done extraordinary service and new gifts identified have been brought to the fore. Despite economic stress, funds contributed to our Meetinghouse allow us to move forward towards obtaining our Certificate of Occupancy. Concentration on the Meetinghouse sometimes seems to take our energy away from other aspects of our spiritual development.

In addition to welcoming two new members, another important legacy is our children. Loving teens in our community are able to provide childcare for our youngest children and, after a difficult start, we offered weekly First Day School during the school year. The curriculum last winter and spring included the life of Christ, his radical message and behavior, and Gospel stories. The autumn curriculum was dedicated to learning about the early Quakers, augmented with readings directly from Fox's journal. There is a tension that exists between providing fun and interest for kids so they want to attend FDS, and providing substantive spiritual content.

We consider the quality of our meeting for worship. We think of 1 Samuel 3:1 "And the word of the Lord was precious in those days; there was no open vision." Accordingly, we encourage those who have not spoken yet in meeting or for a while to speak when they are so moved.

We are joyful about the ministries we have, and look forward to practicing this communication of our faith with tenderness and honesty. Hopefully in this coming year, we will have more opportunities to share our faith more overtly, and through that we will carry out our faith into the wider world more boldly.