

## **ATLANTA FRIENDS MEETING STATE OF THE MEETING REPORT**

"In the humble as well as the more conspicuous tasks, we confidently believe that strength will be given to each one of us, as we place ourselves at the disposal of God and respond to the promptings of the Spirit." 1925. Christian Faith and Practice in the experience of the Society of Friends.

This year has been one of deep and tender searching on the issue of racism and inclusivity in our meeting. Based on a concern brought forward by the members of our discussion group, ORAIARH we embarked upon a process of personal and corporate reflection. Our process has been imperfect, courageous, Spirit-led, enlightening, liberating, sometimes giving rise to feelings of hurt, discomfort and tension. Yet we will continue this journey of blessed discovery because we are called by the Spirit to justice, and personal as well as corporate unity. As we move forward we grow spiritually stronger.

In this report on the spiritual state of Atlanta Friends Meeting, we record our work, achievements, seeking and leadings. They reflect this blessed community in action. We continue to welcome new members and attenders who find our worship and community a place to begin or continue their spiritual search. During 2000 Bill Jenkins, Brooke Hopkins, Leni Johnson, Marlene Johnson, and Nina Gooch were welcomed into membership. Angie Love, Loretta Lucy Miller, and Dale Chapman transferred their membership into our meeting. Rick Martinson and Beth Miller, as well as Dale Chapman and Will Wakeman were married under the care of the Meeting. Memorial services were held for John Ball and Pat Mullins. They will be greatly missed as will those Friends who have moved away. Elizabeth Enloe, Alex Horsley, and George and Neva Fisk transferred their memberships to other meetings. We currently have approximately 130 adult members and 29 associate members. We list over 300 members and active attenders in our Directory, and welcome over 150 to Meeting for Worship on most First Days and an average of 63 children to First Day School.

### Ministry and Worship Committee

Ministry and Worship Committee continues to work to define and refine ideas about the core essence of Quakerism and we seek to nurture a religious community, which provides a safe place to discuss differing and deeply held beliefs. We are delighted that the Meeting is growing and will continue to seek ways to make our large meeting an easy place to get to know people, that has a sense of unity and common purpose.

An important emphasis this year was the initiative to make the Meeting a more inclusive and welcoming to all those who desire to worship in the manner of Friends. Another concern was the Meeting's children, whether they were spending enough time in Meeting for Worship and learning enough about the core beliefs and practices of Friends.

Atlanta Friends were well represented at wider Quaker gatherings such as SAYMA and the FGC Gathering. Mary Ann Downey and Perry Treadwell continue their work in the Travelling Ministries Program of FGC.

### Care and Counsel Committee

In 2000, the Care and Counsel Committee saw the Care Quilt give comfort to members/attenders. It was used by those who were ill, had surgery, or lost loved ones and was, most recently, with Pat Mullins when she died. To record the quilt's journeys, the committee has decided to purchase a journal. So that those who have had the quilt may write entries in the journal.

This last year saw an upsurge in requests for Clearness Committees, and we set up six or more of them. We also have engaged Ron Nuse as the Meeting Photographer, and he has begun to create and maintain a photographic record of the Meeting. Perhaps one day we will have a Meeting directory with member/attender photographs, which would make it much easier to connect names and faces.

Routine Care & Counsel Committee activities include having Rich Klima and others at the Greeting Table to provide information, giving candles to departing members/attenders, training First Day greeters, and writing articles about new members in the newsletter. In an attempt to make the community more aware of our availability to provide assistance with personal concerns, members of our committee began wearing purple name tags, and we were mentioned in the verbal and written announcements each First Day.

We have provided meals, transportation and written expressions of support in times of crisis, sadness or joy. Despite our efforts to meet the needs of the Meeting community, we have faced some challenges this year, including the fact that we had a limited number of volunteers while the need for meals and transportation increased. We, therefore, had to triage our requests based on the level of need.

A recent leading has been to give recognition to the many volunteers who help at Meeting in many ways. We plan to note volunteer contributions in the newsletter every month and give volunteers an annual dessert party. Finally, we have had a number of long-time members rotate off the committee and would love to have some new members join us.

### Religious Education

Religious Education Committee has as usual spent a busy year overseeing the First Day School program for children and young people, arranging seasonal events, and trying to keep the Meeting as a whole informed and involved in the program. The main work of the committee is hands-on and various, from rocking babies to listening to the concerns of Young Friends in high school.

Beyond the immediacy of teaching, there were two main foci for the year: first, a continuing effort to provide lines of connection and support between RE and the rest of the Meeting; and second, to make the programs we oversee reflect and support ethnic and racial diversity.

Progress was made on a commitment to have volunteers in every classroom in order to ease the burden on teachers and to give those Friends who may not have many encounters with our young people, the chance to forge friendships across age lines. We operate with the assumption that the famous "it takes a village" maxim is true: it takes a Meeting to raise a child into spiritual maturity. It also takes children for a Meeting to have spiritual health. In May, the second annual Celebration of Children and Youth was held.

"Little Meeting," a small more-or-less silent worship welcoming to children, continued to grow in popularity. The Meeting as a whole also considered a proposal that originated in RE to have two regular Meetings for Worship on First Days to give families and teachers more options for attending Meeting for Worship as well as First Day School.

With regard to the effort to promote diversity, the committee spent several workdays in the summer clearing out old, often offensively white-only, materials. An Orientation Day was held in the fall, for families to get to know one another. Some new materials were purchased. A workshop on teaching and on how to interrupt racism was planned. The committee members struggle with the effects of racism and white privilege on our program.

### Young Friends Oversight Committee

The Young Friends Oversight Committee has had a very exciting year. With the departure of the previous Clerk of the Committee, Jennifer Dickey, who is greatly missed the Committee was faced with a vacuum in of adult leadership.

It became apparent that to continue having Young Friends events scheduled outside of First Day School, the Committee needed more adult participation. We began by addressing the issue of adult leadership and support at events that would insure the safety of our youth. As a result, we are now requiring that interested adults go through a screening process. Upon completion they become Friendly Adult Presences (FAP's). We now have eight (8) FAP's and several more are in process.

Our second challenge was to begin to schedule events. As we began this, we became aware of the overwhelming time that is required for the organization of such events. The result of our realization was the Meeting's approval of the appointment of a Youth Coordinator in Tenth Month, 2000. The Coordinator will be responsible for organizing a program for our young people. The Committee is now compiling a specific job description for the position.

Finally, we would like to express our appreciation to Katie Smilie, a Committee member, who has enthusiastically taken on responsibility of planning and implementing a successful service project program for our youth.

### Finance Committee

The Finance Committee has identified two (2) major issues from a financial standpoint that are affecting the Meeting. Namely, the need for wider volunteer participation and the effect of an ever-larger Meeting. When volunteers are not available for certain duties within the meeting, we are forced to purchase more services.

Our wonderfully growing Meeting for Worship, First Day School, and Young Friends' programs reveal that we are running out of space. The Finance Committee has started to look seriously at long-range plans and the retirement of our mortgage this year provides a financial window of opportunity. We see the effect of a growing meeting in our budget with growth for 2001 projected at 20%. Our meeting facility is widely used by the community around us for which we are grateful. The price of this is an increased cost for management, cleaning, and repair of the Meeting House

### Oversight Committee

The Oversight Committee has had the opportunity to deal with its usual tasks over the last year, including alarm systems, insurance, employee reviews and the renewal of leases. We have also overseen projects, which should not need our attention again for a few years, including the revision of the Resident Manager and Secretary job descriptions. In doing its work the Committee has had to face some of the effects of the growth of the Meeting, including the space needs of Religious Education. In response to this we have begun the process of long range planning.

Our most challenging and potentially rewarding work has been even less tangible. We have examined how racism affects the mission of our committee and the Meeting. We have explored our relations with tenants and employees, and the Decatur Police Department. Most importantly, we have looked into our own hearts and actions to seek ways of eliminating our personal and corporate racism.

### Meeting House Committee

The Meeting House Committee carried out permanent improvements and regular upkeep of the building and grounds, including the establishment of a new cleaning contract and completing the security/fire alarm system. A project to improve the acoustics in the greeting room has been initiated. The larger issue of expansion of the Meeting House has also been discussed particularly in relation to the needs of Religious Education for more classroom space.

### Social Concerns Committee

During 2000, the Social Concerns Committee sought opportunities for the Meeting to serve the wider community through volunteer efforts, financial support of projects, and through support of the work of Quaker service organizations.

'Our Role As Individuals In America's Racial History' (ORAIARH) continued under the sponsorship of this committee for its third year. The Meeting approved a minute this year based on ORAIARH's recommendations relating to "becoming a safer and more welcoming spiritual home for all regardless of color and ethnicity." The minute called upon committees and groups in the meeting to use a set of queries to examine themselves and report their findings to the Monthly Meeting. The group also helped sponsor a workshop on personal racism for clerks of committees and other members and attenders. Another group, 'Overcoming Racism,' continued to discuss personal racism.

Green Friends, another group sponsored by Social Concerns Committee, held several workshops and presentations on simplicity, population and consumption issues. Our FCNL (Friends Committee for National Legislation) subcommittee sponsored a forum on priorities for lobbying and identified environmental concerns as a lead priority.

This year Social Concerns Committee brought minutes to the Monthly Meeting concerning environmental issues, the death penalty, and the Israeli/Palestinian conflict. Despite all these activities, the Social Concerns Committee itself remains very small, with an average of no more than four members.

### Central America Committee

The Central America Committee's main efforts have been directed toward events that will happen in 2001. Three adults from the Meeting will join us at the 10th anniversary celebration of our sister community, El Sitio, El Salvador, in Second Month, 2001. Some 10 young Friends are planning to visit

the community during Christmas 2001. They have organized themselves into subcommittees to pursue fundraising, travel planning and education for the visit.

During our visit to El Sitio, we will discuss several planned projects that have been sponsored by the Meeting with local community leaders. Since the committee co-clerks will be moving to El Salvador in early spring, there is a need for additional leadership to help maintain our sister city relationship.

The committee has also cosponsored visiting speakers from Central America.

#### Fall Retreat Planning Committee

The 2000 Fall Retreat was held at Camp Daniel Morgan, Hard Labor Creek State Park over the weekend of Ninth Month 22 - 24, 2000. Thirty-four members, attenders and guests participated. Kim Carlyle of Asheville Friends Meeting led a workshop entitled, "Peace, Social Concerns and Climate Change". Our own, Judith Streit led a workshop on the Bible, and Nicole Rennie facilitated a crafts activity. Other activities included boating, swimming, games, conversation, eating and a campfire.

Every year the financial goal of the committee is to balance our income primarily through participants' registration fees. In recent years there has been some concern about our ability to cover our expenses. However, often shortly before the retreat, enough registrations arrive to meet our goal, and we see this as an example of the Spirit working among us.

#### Nominating Committee

The Nominating Committee has achieved three significant goals this year. We have used a process of prayerful discernment to identify those friends that we will ask to serve, and this process has opened us to guidance from the Spirit. For the first time in our history, the Atlanta Friends Meeting has a Handbook that provides descriptions of responsibilities approved by the Meeting for all officers, staff, committees and representatives to other organizations. We realized the need to keep this information current and have accepted this on-going responsibility. We organized a committee fair to recognize those who serve the meeting, and to educate and involve those who are not yet serving. As the Meeting continues to grow in both the number of attenders and jobs to be filled; we are challenged to help those who are new to find the right place to be involved and to serve. Members of the committee need to represent the diversity of the meeting and work at learning the gifts newcomers bring.

#### Gathered Meeting Retreat Planning Committee

Twenty-four members and attenders participated in the 13th annual Gathered Meeting Retreat designed to nurture and deepen the spiritual life of our Meeting. The retreat, held over the weekend of Fourth Month 17 - 19, 2000 at the Calvin Conference Center, focused on The Fullness of Quaker Community and was facilitated by Margery Larrabee.

We are proud of having completed the guidelines for planning future retreats, and this achievement has been nothing less than energizing. We allowed ourselves to be led by the Spirit to select Marcelle Martin as our facilitator for the 2001 Retreat. This decision is a testament to our faith and cohesion as a group. With joy we embrace the challenges of identifying an elder for Marcelle, branching out in search of potential facilitators, responding to the ORAIARH queries, and our transition to a new committee co-clerk. With enthusiasm, we look forward to next year's retreat, having unlimited attendance, reaching out to first time attenders, and to providing a Religious Education series prior to the retreat. In all this we continue to realize that we are truly blessed.

#### Advancement Committee

The Meeting continued to support worship groups in North Georgia, Northwest Georgia, and in Macon. Several visits to these worship groups were made by members of the meeting, and a group from Macon attended Meeting for Worship and Meeting for Business here.

"In our Meetings, as members one of another, we must be alert to the changing situations that come to each of us. Responsibility for this ministry of love and service, rests with each one of us by action and in prayer." London Yearly Meeting, 1956. Christian Faith and Practice in the experience of the Society of Friends.