

State of Society Report 2015  
Midcoast Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends

Our spiritual community has been deeply enriched by a growing number of attenders, a broadening and deepening pastoral care, lively outreach and programs on peace, and a revival of our first day school. The growth of these commitments and opportunities has inspired us to be more active in our caring for our spiritual needs and quests, to peace and social and environmental justice, to our children and our community. Our committees are working effectively. We feel more complete and strengthened as a Quaker community prepared to meet the personal and collective challenges coming with growth and change. And underpinning all of this is our sound financial situation.

Our Pastoral Care Committee came to share a conviction that pastoral care includes more than caring for those who are ill, hospitalized, suffering loss, or in need of transportation. As important as these services are, pastoral care also involves ongoing awareness of and response to the spiritual needs of one another. Pastoral care calls us to attend to the practice of deep listening. In so doing, our community can strengthen.

We came to our conviction, first through deeply listening as we have cared for the sick and/or elderly and bereaved. In our more recent seasoning process, we experienced among ourselves the fruits of deeply listening. We felt the presence of Spirit among us and experienced easing, comfort, support, trust, intimacy – all of which lay not only a foundation for individual spiritual well-being, but also for strengthening our Meeting community.

Ministry and Counsel's work during 2014 included anticipating adjustments for growth and change, refreshing Meeting literature and inspirational posters, worship sharing about spoken ministry, experimenting with ways of handling introductions and announcements at the rise of meeting when children have a first day program, and convening a clearness committee for a marriage under the care of the Meeting. We've noted the loss of member Earnest Foust and the completion and transmittal of Peter Haviland's Memorial Minute.

The Midcoast Outreach and Peace Center divides its responsibilities between community outreach and learning and sharing experiences and concerns of Friends. Overseen by steering and program committees, it has hired a part time coordinator, submitted requests for external funding and installed internet service on the property.

Its programs and activities enshrine Quaker values and leadings, focusing on work for peace and social and environmental justice, service to the elderly and families with children. A successful Senior College course on architecture drew around 50 participants. Other offerings have included a successful series on Video and Vittles and Challenges of Change. A long-running Non-Violent communication series continues and "Elder Walk" sessions are under consideration. And we are now planning a series of public events on international humanitarian crises.

This outreach has brought the Meeting not only new activities; it has also increased attendance at Meeting for Worship. A few families with children have begun to attend once a month when we offer children's first day programming.

The Finance Committee has overseen a successful financial year in 2013-14, and looks forward to next year with optimism. The surplus reserve is sound the Meetinghouse is relative new, paid for, and in good condition, and there are not current critical financial issues. The New England Yearly Meeting Pooled Funds has performed well for our long term deposits.

But there are some longer term concerns. The membership is not growing, but aging, with many of the members retired, with fixed incomes that erode with inflation. No recent bequests have been received to increase our surplus funds against future unknowns. We do use a portion of our surplus earnings to support our operations. On the other hand, annual contributions increased this year for the first time. We have begun to focus on a planned giving campaign as a means of encouraging larger contributions that can help insure the Meetings financial future.

Our meetinghouse, its lovely grounds and our library are well cared for. Some minor repairs have been made in the building and the meetinghouse interior will be refreshed with a new coat of paint. And our snow plowing brought us through the severe winter. The library will be even more user friendly as its collection has been reorganized in specific categories.

As Midcoast Meeting continues to strengthen our spiritual life and fulfill our Quaker testimonies, we reveal our striving to 'answer that of God in everyone' by working as a community, fostering a spirit of toleration and mutual concern for each other. As we fulfill our Meeting's undertakings, our commitment to truth and integrity will continue to grow and flourish.