

## **State of Society Report – 2017**

### **Midcoast Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends**

We believe that through the work of this committee, we now are better known in our community as Quakers and supporters of important testimonies of peace, equality, and stewardship by virtue of both word and deed.

Ministry and Counsel. In 2017, we witnessed a deepening of the spiritual life of the Meeting. We felt greater depth in worship and in our spoken ministry, more compassion, and a sense of belonging among members and attenders. Many visitors and attenders noted the welcome and peace they felt in our presence. We believe that two recent changes have contributed to our maturing spirituality.

First, we have initiated monthly Listening Sessions. Typically, six to ten participants listen deeply as each responds to the same query, with no discussion. Just listening. Second, we started holding our monthly Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business in the Meeting room, rather than the social room. Business Meetings seem to have gone more smoothly as Friends settle into business in a more peaceful and contemplative spirit.

We continue to provide weekly, paid child care to encourage parents of young children to attend our meeting. We have also partnered with Pastoral Care Committee to hold Meetings for Worship at members' assisted living communities. When one of our regular attenders, Trudie Seybold, turned 100, we celebrated her birthday with a special luncheon. When interest in the monthly potluck seemed to be waning and people were leaving if they had not brought food, we joined with the Hospitality Committee to start a "Simple Soup" meal in its place. Friends take turns bringing soup and bread. As a result, more people attend, enjoying the meal and the lively fellowship with no guilt if they did not bring food.

Pastoral Care. In 2017 the Pastoral Care Committee carried on its usual role of trying to be aware of Friends who may be in difficulty, whether illness, loss, isolation, financial stress, or in other areas. We had the great pleasure of putting on a 100th birthday party at the Meetinghouse for our oldest Friend. We increased to two the number of shut-in Friends for whom we held periodic special meetings at their homes. We also have increased visitation for the oldest home-bound member of our Meeting, encouraging others to participate in the visits. We are in close contact with her family. We have a concern about members experiencing loneliness and are trying to expand our awareness and knowledge in order better to address this issue. We continued to support each other, meeting monthly in each other's homes, being available to each other in case of need, and always prepared to offer pastoral care to the wider meeting.

Building and Grounds. The Meeting House building and grounds have been well maintained with no current problems to report. Nancy Holmes, a botanist and professional gardener, brought new life to the garden in front of the Meetinghouse. We added two major structures. First was the 50 kw solar farm that supports nine

subscribers. We are leasing the land to the co-op owners for the next 30 years. Thanks to a donation from Trudie Seybold, a line of two dozen bushes will grow to screen the solar array from the view of the Meeting House. Another new structure is the 10X10 ft Diaper House that stands in the parking lot and was built to house the diapers distributed annually through the Ecumenical Diaper Bank, a service by a consortium of eight area churches, including Midcoast Friends Meeting. The Diaper House, sponsored by an anonymous donor, is built in the architectural style of the Meeting House and should last a long time. Finally, through the generosity of several members and attenders, we were able to replace the old seat cushions in the Meeting for Worship room without drawing on our operating budget. The new cushions are thicker, sturdier, and more comfortable.

Hospitality. Although this committee had only two regular members for most of 2017, many others stepped up to help keep our traditional spirit of hospitality living and well. That meant purchase of coffee, paper goods and plastic trash bags; bringing after-Meeting snacks, making coffee, and setting up the hospitality area and cleaning up each week; organizing soup and bread for first Sunday lunch; as well as being a welcoming presence when New England Yearly Meeting Ministry and Counsel Committee met at Midcoast Friends Meeting.

Finance. The Finance Committee and Treasurer developed a budget for the new fiscal year that began June 1, 2017. Sunnyside Accounting started keeping our books and working with the committee to develop spreadsheets outlining our financial status. We also arranged to acquire a discounted version of Quick Books for use by our accountant through TechSoup. In response to annual pledge letters, members and attenders sent contributions, which we acknowledged for the tax year. In addition, we received and disbursed separate funds donated by members and attenders to purchase new cushions for the Meeting benches, as well as receiving and disbursing an anonymous gift to build and maintain the diaper house for the Ecumenical Food Pantry's Diaper Bank program (see MOPC Report below). The Meeting also received a grant of \$3,000 over two fiscal years from the NEYM Legacy Fund to help support MOPC.

We continue to work on long-term goals such as a capital campaign and reviewing how our reserves are invested with a view to improving diversification and returns while remaining true to our values. In December 2017, Kate Perkins volunteered to serve on the Finance Committee and was added to its membership beginning January, 2018. We value the service of all those who have helped with the committee this year, but we note the need for additional members familiar with budget and investment planning and adept with financial software.

Communication. Communications are maintained through the eNews format; also via updates to the website Google calendar of all events at or related to the Meeting. We have made a successful transition from the old monthly printed Newsletter to the eNews that is sent to all members, attenders and those who request it. There are approximately 100 names on the list. Copies of the old Newsletter remain archived on

the web site. Minutes from Meeting for Business are also archived and new minutes are posted within a few days of each meeting. The eNews format allows for timely reminders of upcoming events, news about Friends and other information of interest to Friends.

Midcoast Outreach and Peace Center (MOPC). We have continued to benefit from the work of a very active Outreach Coordinator, supported in part by Legacy Gift funds, which provide a substantial part of MOPC's operating costs. The Coordinator, Sue Rockwood, holds office hours twice a week at the Meeting House and, with the backing of the MOPC Committee, has spear-headed numerous activities which make Midcoast Friends Meeting ever more recognized in the wider community. Building on the success of the past 3 ½ years, MOPC has participated in, and often provided leadership for, ecumenical activities ranging from community service to workshops to observances of important events to environmental initiatives. Examples (not all) of these varied activities in 2017 include the Interfaith MLK Observance, which drew more than 150 people; a shared leadership role in distributing over 11,000 diapers to families in need; the solar farm "plug-in" ceremony; a presentation by Somali Bantu Farmers from Lewiston; and overnight hospitality to youth groups such as the Arthur Morgan Quaker Middle School, OUT Maine, and Twospirit and Transgender Action Camp. Hosting Lincoln County Indivisible meetings once a month, as well as presentations on timely topics, has drawn many people from outside the Meeting and enhanced our visibility as a prominent player in community affairs.

April 15, 2018