

## **State of Society Report – 2018**

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

We have been told that our Meeting offers a safe space for visitors who feel welcomed and included. New members, active attenders and transfers feel honored for their gifts and often jump right in to committee work and other contributions. Our members respond actively to those in crisis. During worship we enjoy the silence as we search for the spirit and people often comment that a completely silent meeting was uplifting while vocal ministry frequently resonates with many present. Many enjoy the view out of the big bay window as a way of connecting with nature. Our practice of sharing afterthoughts is often a rich experience that builds connection. We hold many satellite worship sessions with Friends who can't attend for health and other reasons.

The challenges we face as a community are that we are quite diverse geographically making it hard to get together for other events during the week. Our transition to holding business meeting in the worship room is a work in process, but largely successful.

#### **Library**

The Library Committee dove into our shelves this year, consolidating many various materials that had found their way into piles, many out-of-date (the most amusing of which may have been a fund-raising letter from Moscow House from 1987), and shelving the many new volumes which Friends consistently donate. We are most excited to be putting an index of our library on Library Thing, a website several other Quaker meetings have used, which will allow us to search for our books online, and read and leave reviews of individual books. To catch the eye of Friends and attenders, we moved some books around the shelves, not least of all to a bookshelf placed right next to our coffee machine, and took to placing select books on display face-front, just like at a bookstore.

#### **Ministry and Counsel**

The Committee on Ministry and Counsel was smaller than usual this year, numbering only three people but responding to Meeting needs as they arose. Others in the Meeting assisted with the greeting role, aided by a set of guidelines. Business Meeting accepted our proposal that the role of greeter continue to be filled by interested members and regular attenders as well as committee members. In September, our faithful child care provider felt moved to offer her services on a volunteer basis as a way of supporting the work we do. We gratefully accepted. On Wednesday mornings, we tried holding an hour of silent worship, which drew from one to five people, two of whom had not come on Sundays. However, the numbers seemed too small to continue, and we therefore laid down the Wednesday meeting. We responded to a request from a member of the Meeting for a clearness committee to offer support and guidance in a difficult family situation. That support has continued in the form of occasional meetings as requested as well as personal contacts. The individual reports that the committee's support has been helpful to her in resolving the complex issues she has faced.

We coordinated memorial services for two long-time attenders. On July 14<sup>th</sup>, we celebrated the life of Trudy Seybold, who died at the age of 100. Trudy's service was well-attended by meeting members, two generations of her family, and representatives of the Boothbay Community Center, the Boothbay Region Health Center, and the Boothbay Harbor Rotary Club. On September 29<sup>th</sup>, Friends gathered to remember Jean (87) and Dick (85) Harris, joined by friends from CONA, Damariscotta River Association, Senior College, and others. Many pieces of Jean's art were on display, including one of the Wednesday Walkers, a group Dick founded and led for many years.

### **Pastoral Care**

Based on a commitment to check in confidentially during committee meetings, the Pastoral Care Committee experiences a high degree of trust. It is clear to us this trust expands as we care about, and for, the entire meeting. We look forward to all activities, such as Listening Sessions, book discussion groups, shared work projects, that help trust grow through getting to know one another better.

During 2018, in addition to our customary responsibilities, we appreciated wide participation in continued meetings for worship with shut-ins and taking Sunday lunches to our oldest member with the help of other members. We became aware how more in the meeting are facing issues of aging and transition. We appreciated opportunities to meet jointly with Ministry and Counsel to discuss numerous responsibilities that we share and look forward to more such meetings. For example, in 2018 we organized (an informal) memorial meeting instead of Ministry and Counsel.

A passage in the draft edition of NEYM's revision Faith and Practice chapter on Pastoral Care, stood out to us: "Shared Responsibility: ...each friend is encouraged to be alert to the spiritual, emotional, and physical needs of others and of the wellbeing of the community as a whole."

### **Building and Grounds**

We often hear people observing how special our meeting house is. We gratefully acknowledge that the building is a lovely container for our spiritual community. The building is only 23 years old and we are setting aside funds for larger expenses such as a roof replacement within the next 10 years. In the fall we conducted an energy audit that recommended a few things we could do to improve the energy efficiency of the building. This has the benefit of lowering our carbon footprint and operating costs. So far, we have installed 160ft of boiler insulation in the basement and have plans for other improvements.

Our members are actively caring for the gardens in front and the children's play area, while contractors maintain the grounds by mowing and snow plowing depending on the season. In the spring we did some basic maintenance of the parking area. The planting of 2 dozen bushes designed to screen the view of the back of the solar farm we are hosting continue to grow, with only a few losses.

### **Hospitality**

Although this committee had only two regular members for most of 2018, many others stepped up to help keep our traditional spirit of hospitality living and well. That meant purchase of supplies; 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.

### **Finance**

During 2018 we added Barbara Gibson to our Finance committee, so we now have four members, two of whom are familiar with QuickBooks. We began discussing how to transfer bookkeeping from Sunnyside to the Finance Committee to reduce expenses going forward, with a view to making that transition before the next fiscal year. Sue Rockwood of our Midcoast Outreach and Peace Center (MOPC) is helping us in our role in continuing funding activities of People United Against Racism (PUAR), a local ecumenical group which sponsors the annual Martin Luther King, Jr. programs and other events. 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. To that end, we invested a portion of a donation made in memory of one of our members in a CD at the local

bank, to be used as a reserve for future roof or other repairs on the Meetinghouse. We value the service of all those who have helped with the committee this year.

### **Communication**

We transitioned to a more professional looking eNewsletter format using MailChimp that also allows people to manage their subscriptions. News is sent out on an as-needed basis. Currently there are 104 subscribers of which about half are members. We also updated the printed Directory which is done every 4 years and plan to create updates as inserts every year or 2 going forward. The web site is actively maintained as minutes are added to the on-line archive and the web calendar is updated frequently to show scheduled events.

### **Midcoast Outreach and Peace Center (MOPC)**

MOPC has had a busy and successful year. The varied activities, events, and engagements were dependent upon the dedicated and invaluable service of our part-time staffer and coordinator Sue Rockwood. In 2018 a wide array of speakers, programs, guests, and visitors were sponsored not only for meeting members but also for the wider community.

MOPC has continuing relationships with People United Against Racism, the Ecumenical Food Pantry, Diaper Bank, and Midcoast Green Collaborative. The Meeting House hosts gatherings of community groups in addition to meeting functions and co-sponsors events with Coastal Senior College. One such event featured Leigh I. Saufley, the Chief Justice of the Maine Supreme Judicial Court.

MOPC co-sponsored two local events at the Lincoln Theatre with a focus on Native Americans in Maine. One was a talk by Sherri Mitchell, a Penobscot elder and author of Sacred Instructions: Indigenous Wisdom for living Spirit-Based Change. The other was a screening of DAWNLAND, a film documenting the commission that investigated the long-standing practice of taking Wabanaki children from their home and family.

Our coordinator, Sue Rockwood, handles rentals of the Meeting House, local publicity for the many events held there, facilitation in staging varied programs, and holds office hours two days a week.

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.