

## 2016 Morningside State of the Meeting Sunday, December 18, 2016

*“The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.” (Matthew 9: 37b-38 NIV).*

On December 18, 2016, Members and Attenders of Morningside Monthly Meeting gathered to consider the spiritual state of the Meeting over the past year. The convener presented three Queries as the basis for our Worship Sharing:

1. What is the state of the Meeting?
2. Where are the light and joy able to work and be active?
3. Where are we challenged or where is the light not breaking through?

Attendance has flowered this year, and the “gathered quality of silence” is appreciated. Meeting for Worship has been well attended and a suggestion was made for an additional mid-week Meeting. Two weddings were held under the care of Meeting this year, and an increased number of Young Adults visited and continue participating. Meeting with Children is going well with “two wonderful spaces” and two very good people whom we pay to be with the children. “The regular and reliable childcare is an invitation to parents to attend Meeting.”

This growth of new people has been accompanied by a reduction in present and available seasoned members, mostly due to pressing concerns in their lives. This change in the makeup of meeting has resulted in several challenges, most notably a difficulty in finding seasoned Friends to fill vital committees, as well as the loss of seasoned members who served as mentors, and who have helped build our beloved community. While it was agreed that the successful Retreat is an important annual event for Meeting, it was also noted that the planning and execution of it had left the diminished leadership of M&C “overwhelmed and stressed.”

Accompanying these challenges is the resolve of the Meeting to continue reaching out to more and different people, as well as to those who have been missing from Meeting. We can institute reaching out by “sharing what Quakerism means to each of us” to others, within and without Meeting. Sharing within would allow us to better know one another; sharing without would help bring more people into Meeting. For this reason, the re-establishment of the newsletter is greatly appreciated, and Friends are urged to provide contributions to it. One Friend wondered if she could include messages received after Meeting. Another Friend wondered if pictures of children could be added to the newsletter and the website. The larger question is “How can we make our website and newsletter more conducive to the life of the community, sharing information about important events in folks’ lives (e.g. birthdays, etc.)?”

Other ways of sharing include Monthly Bible study, which has been “valuable and meaningful in helping develop the capacity to listen to and welcome different perspectives and interpretations.” Hospitality at Meeting is a welcoming by the entire Meeting, since all may participate, not only bringing food, but also volunteering. Even Announcements after Worship can become places to share. One person spoke of how important it is to hear about beauty in each other’s lives--friendship, recommending films and books and music--which allows us to learn about and appreciate what others perceive as beautiful.

Sharing ourselves with others takes place outside of Meeting as well, at events, such as the interfaith breakfast in Flushing on December 3 and the November 26 Thanksgiving lunch at Breathing space,

attended by Meeting members and attenders. The Woodbourne Prison Worship Group continues under our care. The men appreciate the attendance of volunteers and the Meeting as a whole shows its support when members sign Christmas and birthday cards for the men, confirming our connection.”

The joy of Morningside is being part of a giving and caring community; the challenge for Morningside will be how to remain a giving and caring community when the number of seasoned workers is few, and as the presidential election has presented new challenges that will ask Friends to seek how we are going to position ourselves in the next four years. One answer to confronting our challenges was provided by a member of M&C, who related that the lack of available skilled hands has allowed “soul searching about the real, fundamental meaning of the Meeting,” what we are really called to do, and what is really important for the life of the community.

Perhaps the workers are few so that we may better hear what we are supposed to do. In the meantime, it is our small gestures of sharing and caring that maintain this often overwhelmed, but continually loving community called Morningside.

In Friendship,  
Jerry Reisig