

## **Lancaster Monthly Meeting State of the Meeting Report for 2004**

In 2004 Lancaster Monthly Meeting continued to grow in spirit and in action. This was reflected in the Deepening and Strengthening Project report presented to Philadelphia Yearly Meeting in April 2004 which found that although Lancaster Meeting ranked 22nd in adult membership in the Yearly Meeting, it ranked 3rd in average attendance on First Day.

Meeting for Worship is the foundation of our strength. We continued to have two Meetings for Worship each week, at 8:00 am and 10:00 am. Many in our community have expressed their sense that both the silence and the messages have become deeper in the past year. As the life of the spirit grows, we become more nurturing, which in turn creates a deeper spirit. In preparation for Meeting for Worship we had two discussion groups, Quaker Talk and New Theology. This focus on the spirit and leading a spirit-led life has created a vitality within the Meeting and has resulted in the Meeting being a body which nurtures its members and attenders in many ways.

Our Meeting has formally nurtured the leadings of many individuals (at least 25, probably more) within our community through financial support, physical labor, clearness committees, support groups, and in other ways. Among the observable results of such nurturance in 2004 were the Underground Railroad summer camp program, further Alternatives to Violence Program training in Bosnia, construction of a labyrinth on the meetinghouse lawn, and the ongoing weekly peace vigil in downtown Lancaster, for a few examples. When so many people are responding so directly to the Light within them, and the community responds to that Light, then a community is strong, and the many Lights will certainly be beacons for others.

To nurture individual spirituality, a local Spiritual Formation program based on Philadelphia Yearly Meeting's program was implemented. Forty-eight individuals committed themselves to this 9-month program, which includes three retreats, monthly large-group discussions on readings, and monthly small-group meetings for individual spiritual companionship. Additionally, a weekly Spiritual Oasis support group has been formed. An ongoing couple's support group, which grew out of earlier couple enrichment programs, met several times during the year and developed plans for another couple enrichment program to be held in 2005. The Meeting community also witnessed one wedding and one renewal of marital vows.

Our children are an important part of our spiritual life and mission. First Day School has made tremendous strides in developing a three year curriculum and formal lesson guides to insure that the three basic age groups—grade, middle and high school—are all studying the same general subjects during parallel timeframes. Planning individual events at regular three-week intervals to involve all the students and provide breathing spaces for the teachers has provided variety for the students, a break for the teachers and a chance for adults and students to have joint activities and promote bonding. The high school group has started developing its own Meeting for Business in order to be self-

determining in its class and social activities. There has been a concerted effort to get the senior students to act as mentors and teachers for some of the younger children with the aim of developing a more involved attitude in Meeting and providing opportunities for leadership. Our own Fox Tales summer camp was attended by 14 campers aged 5 to 10. The Lancaster County Underground Railroad History and Performance Camp, held jointly with Mount Zion AME Church in Columbia, PA, was attended by about 17 children, aged 5 to 12. The Loans and Scholarship Committee gave financial support for higher education to several individuals.

We have been reaching out to the larger community as well with the weekly peace vigil, which is held in downtown Lancaster and is now in its third year, the mentoring of a family through the Bridge of Hope program, participation in Compeer's Faith in Action Coalition, and scheduling some forums at times more convenient for the public to attend. The Healing Racism Working Group has helped to nurture healing within our meeting community through its own meetings and organizing several forums. The group has been active in the larger community as well. The Peace and Social Concerns Committee nurtured the development of the Lancaster Interchurch Peace Witness (LIPW), a coalition of peace leaders from several denominations, to mobilize local faith communities in support of peace. The Peace and Social Concerns Committee has reflected our deep concern for the war in Iraq in its search for effective ways to speak for peace, including holding a forum on "Christian Teachings on Militarism" that attracted more than 200 people from Lancaster County. There seems to be a general sense that we cannot act alone but must seek to bond with other groups to have a social and political impact. It will be an ongoing challenge to find our corporate voice to speak our concerns beyond the meetinghouse so that we do not speak only to other Quakers.

Our spiritual leadings have extended beyond our local community to the world. One of our members led Alternatives to Violence Program (AVP) workshops in Bosnia-Herzegovina, another took a 9-day learning tour in Guatemala with a Mennonite Central Committee group to learn about Guatemalans' healing from "La Violencia" (the civil war), one couple attended the Friends World Committee for Consultation (FWCC) conference in New Zealand in leadership roles, another couple is currently in Lesotho working in the Peace Corps, one person does medical work with children in Haiti on an ongoing basis. These individual ministries are shared with Meeting in various ways, including forums and the incorporation of information and experiences into the First Day School program. Sometimes Meeting participates directly, for example, by collecting and sending many books to Lesotho to help develop a children's library there.

We value a new generation of leadership. We have nurtured individual leadings and leadership abilities in all ages, with the result that our leadership covers a range from the teens to the 80s and includes both members and attenders. Our openness to new ideas and acknowledgement of the Light in each person contribute to the overall vitality of our Meeting and encourage individuals to serve on committees. We have 28 active committees, among them the Social Committee, which provided many opportunities for spiritual fellowship and fun by organizing snacks between worship and forums, the annual picnic, Friendly Dinners, a Halloween party, and monthly potlucks (including

Frugal Meal in November and a Christmas candlelight dinner in December). The Forum Committee developed programs on a variety of topics ranging from the personal introspections of four individuals' spiritual journeys, reports from members who have traveled, and topics related to environmental, racism and peace concerns. One forum was devoted to poetry and another to the annual Meeting art show.

Under the guidance of the Property Committee, we put a new roof on the older portion of the building, improved the electronic heating controls, put a memorial plaque in the Memorial Garden, named the "new" multipurpose room the Community Room, continued to enhance our gardens, and held three work days. The work days were not well attended, however, suggesting we need to take more seriously our responsibilities of stewardship for our property. One of our young Friends, with the help of Meeting friends, built a brick and grass labyrinth on the lawn in fulfillment of his Eagle Scout project. The meetinghouse continued to be used by the Disciples United Community Church for its Saturday services and by various other organizations.

It was brought to our attention that for the past three years our Meeting has been operating at a financial deficit. During the formation of the 2005 budget, it was proposed that the Meeting community consider two budgets, one which would be scaled down to meet the historical average of the previous three years and one which would be based on the projected needs of the community for the coming year. Because we wanted to support the spiritual life of the Meeting, including its service to the world, we decided to support the full budget presented by the Finance Committee. A decision was made to encourage members to regularize their contributions to even the cash flow, remind people to contribute, and explore fundraising activities in 2005. Clearly these fiscal concerns constitute a challenge to our community.

One concern is that while we have a substantial and active group of attenders, we added only two new members in the year 2004. We had one transfer out and one resignation. Two cherished members, Jack Mongar and Lorie Trayer, passed away and are missed. We currently have 146 adult members, 7 associate members and 23 minor members, for a total of 176 persons.

The year 2004 was a good one for Lancaster Meeting, but it has also presented us with various challenges in regard to our effectiveness in the community just outside our doors and in regard to stewardship of our own resources. Perhaps we need to develop a vision for the year 2005, asking ourselves what we, as a Meeting, find most important to be and to do, so that we continue to nurture not only ourselves but others as well.

Respectfully submitted,  
Marilyn Morrison & Myke Rogers  
Maria Cattell & Grayfred Gray  
March 2005