

2006 State of the Meeting Report for Lancaster Monthly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends

Reflecting on the state of Lancaster Monthly Meeting during the year 2006 has shown us both the breadth of variance within our community and the ways in which we are united and clearly belonging to one body. Our experience has shown that both our differences and our commonalities can strengthen our Meeting community and can strengthen our individual commitments to the Meeting. We name here some of the signs of the life of our community.

We are drawn together by our desire to grow spiritually. Many of us participated in small groups focusing on spiritual topics. Worship and Ministry Committee organized year-long 'Friendly Eights' groups for reading, discussion and knowing each other more deeply. There have been on-going discussion groups on new theology and on science and spirituality. Several forums following worship featured sharing of member's spiritual journeys which seem always to draw us spiritually closer. Our meetings for worship at 8:00 and 10:00 continued to be the rich center of our spiritual community for which we feel great gratitude.

We are drawn together by our passion for living out the Quaker testimonies. In our Forums, we learned about specific areas of concern, such as domestic violence, environmental issues, and racism. The active Peace and Social Concerns Committee sponsored an on-going study group on poverty issues. The Healing Racism group continued to be active in working for change and teaching us about hidden racism. One steadfast response to the continuing war in Iraq has been a weekly silent vigil in Lancaster, and we joined with other Lancaster peace groups in additional efforts to promote peace.

We are drawn together through our care about the children of our Meeting. Our committed First Day School Committee led many of us to teach in First Day School or participate in the summer programming, to help with once-a-month intergenerational worship or to plan social times for the children. A series of workshops on Quaker Parenting was offered to the parents of Meeting.

We are drawn together through friendship and through our care for one another. The hospitality of our Social Committee in facilitating once a month potlucks, a weekly snack and mingling time after worship, and in organizing other social times has continued to be of enormous importance in our knowing and caring for each other. As it has been needed and we have been able, we have tried to extend a helping hand to each other, either informally or through the work of Care and Counsel Committee or Comfort and Assistance Committee. This is an on-going effort because we recognize in a community of our size the needs of individuals may be missed. Our year together included grieving together as we mourned the loss of three dearly loved elders of our Meeting, including our last founding member.

Our Meeting is busy and active, and we rejoice in reviewing the many ways members and attenders can find their place to be involved and committed to the community. However we also acknowledge that busyness within the Meeting is often matched by busyness in our lives outside the Meeting. We question how much we are following the Quaker testimony of simplicity of life, and how much we are reflecting values from the mainstream culture. One of our challenges is understanding that having a rich multi-faceted Meeting means that folks will experience

different facets as central for them. We find this a blessing for our community and sometimes a frustration. We need to continue to work at guiding and supporting our varied callings.

Communication about our differences in meeting for worship for business or in other situations has shown us the importance of grounding our discussions in worship. There have been times when we have hurt each other through our speaking or actions. We have also struggled prayerfully to seek the guidance of the Light through our discussion of challenging subjects such as the air-conditioning of our worship room. Listening into unity is an on-going spiritual discipline we desire to learn more fully.

A major step for our Meeting was the laying down of Property Committee and the employment of a couple to work as Facilities Managers for our meetinghouse and grounds. We acknowledged that, while we all need to contribute to the care of our property, our volunteers could not do all that was needed. This step has increased our budget for 2007 by about ten percent. Financial stewardship and the need for increased giving was a focus for the Meeting in 2006 since we had had deficit budgets for several years. A system for automatic monthly contributions was established, and is beginning to be used. We did meet our expenses during 2006, but we realize financial stewardship continues to need our attention.

In conclusion, we find much to be grateful for in the 2006 journey of Lancaster Monthly Meeting. Those things which have drawn us together into shared community and those areas in which we differ can all be blessing in the deepening and strengthening of our Meeting.