

State of the Meeting Report 2004
Tampa Monthly Meeting

Tampa Monthly Meeting has found loving support, strength and guidance in our Meeting for Worship in a year that has brought us both opportunity and challenges. The burden of war has weighed heavily upon our hearts. We have weathered the storms of an election year and of nature. As a community, we have grown physically and spiritually. In reflecting on what has passed, we see what a full and enriching year this has been in our community.

Witness against the war in Iraq has taken many forms through the work and witness of individuals and our Meeting. This has included distributing ribbons and a poem as a daily reminder of the meaning of peace and war, writing and calling Congress with the guidance of FCNL, standing vigil and ongoing prayer. Through the extraordinary efforts of a Friend most strongly led, Tampa Meeting was able to work in coalition with others in our community to bring the AFSC Eyes Wide Open exhibit to USF (on very short notice). We continue our efforts for peace and continue to mourn the loss of life in Iraq.

Individual witness regarding the elections took many forms, the words of Friend Edward Burrough were shared. *“ To the present distracted and broken nation: We are not for names, nor men, nor titles of Government, nor are we for this party nor against the other...but we are for justice and mercy and truth and peace and true freedom, that these may be exalted in our nation, and that goodness, righteousness, meekness, temperance, peace, and unity with God and with one another, that these things may abound. “*

Edward Burrough, 1659

Witness in our community has included working with HOPE (Hillsborough Organization for Progress and Equality) to encourage our County Commission to pay all county employees a living wage and participating in the HOPE membership convention. This commitment enables us to work together with a coalition of congregations and organizations whose voice is but faintly heard in our community. We have found friendship and solidarity with the First United Church (UCC), the same church that first offered the Tampa Worship group space in 1979. Several members of the congregation also meet with the Light Meditation Group which was founded by members of Tampa Monthly Meeting and has been ongoing for two years. This growing relationship has enabled us to present a stronger witness for the cause of peace and justice in the Tampa Bay area.

Tampa Meeting has encouraged members and attenders to seek out a closer relationship to and understanding of our wider Quaker world. Thanks to Friends in St. Petersburg we were able to spend an evening exploring the idea of ministry through the FGC Traveling Ministries program as presented by Deborah Fisch, Deborah Shaw and Jan Dahm, as well as attending a full day workshop the following day hosted by St. Petersburg. A record number of Tampa Friends were enriched by the 2004 Michener Lecture featuring Friend George Lakey. Yearly Meeting and ½ Yearly Meeting also served to help Tampa Meeting grow in our understanding and relationship to our Religious Society. Reports were made and experiences shared by a number of Tampa Friends who serve or have ties to Quaker organizations such as FCNL, FWCC, Penn House, Pendle Hill and Friends Peace Teams.

The leading of Friend Cecilia Yocum in her work with Friends Peace Teams has been joyfully embraced by Tampa Meeting as stated in the following minute:

Minute 2 Sixth Month 2004

Tampa Monthly Meeting supports the leading of Cecilia Yocum to work with Friends Peace Teams in the African Great Lakes Region. We wish to provide spiritual ministry, clearness, prayer and financial support as she continues this work.

Tampa Meeting has sought opportunities to grow through Meeting for Learning. We have learned about each other and our religious society through study and sharing on pamphlets such as: *Spiritual Discernment the context and goal of clearness committees* by Patricia Loring, *Four Doors to Meeting for Worship* by William Taber, and *The Place of Universalism in the Religious Society of Friends or Is Coexistence Possible* by Daniel Seeger. Our learning in a three session Draft Counseling Workshop led by Dana Putney took the form of worship sharing on the questions posed to young draftees by the draft board regarding conscientious objection. Friends found that this sharing moved us deeply and brought us closer as a community. Our learning was further facilitated by the discernment process undertaken on the FCNL priorities and on the SEYM Faith and Practice section on **The Monthly Meeting** and **Establishing New Communities of Friends**. We thank both FCNL and the SEYM Faith and Practice Committee for inviting us to a deeper understanding of who we are through this discernment process.

Tampa Meeting continues to be grateful that we have found a permanent home in our community. We gave thanks in a Meeting for Worship held on March 13th of this year. We were delighted to be joined in worship and for an Open House/potluck on this day by 40 Friends, supporters and relatives.

Tampa Meeting found cause to celebrate upon obtaining a mortgage loan from the Friends Meeting House Fund. This enabled Tampa Meeting to officially become the owner of our property and enabled us to repay in full the generous loan made to us by SEYM. Throughout this journey to establish a permanent presence in Tampa, we have been continually grateful for and mindful of the prayers and support of Friends and Meetings in our SEYM community. Thank you.

Our number of members and regular attenders has grown steadily and our Meeting is challenged to be clear about our faith and our practice. This also requires us to strengthen our committee membership and function. We seek to be organized and to include all who feel called to serve our Meeting in some way. We still stumble and have much to learn as we grow into our stewardship responsibilities. We find a sense of humor and well timed joke quite helpful in this process. Growth has also challenged us to reestablish our First Day school, including being prepared weekly for any number or age of youngsters and erecting a canvas topped gazebo in the backyard. Above all, our continued growth affirms that we have much to offer our community and we joyfully welcome each new presence in our Meeting for Worship.

Our continued journey together as seekers of truth has seen us through both personal and community times of distress. We gather to share our joys, concerns and prayers and we continue to seek the peace within that enables us to move forward and witness to the power of love. We attend Meeting for Worship seeking to be spirit led, seeking to discern what we are called to do and praying for the strength and guidance to be faithful to that call.

Respectfully submitted,
Karen Putney, clerk
Tampa Monthly Meeting