

## **State of the Meeting Report 2005 Tampa Monthly Meeting**

Tampa Friends continue seeking to ground our work and witness through the living silence of our worship together. In considering the query regarding our Meeting for Worship we affirm our experience of feeling “drawn together in the Light by the presence of God.” This year, as any other, has presented joys, concerns and often the need for prayers. Yet in all this we continually feel strengthened and nurtured by our worshipful life in community.

All that we are called to in this troubled world reminds us of the importance, the centrality of our Meeting community in our lives. Through Meetings for Learning we continue to seek greater understanding of the Quaker path, of our Faith and Practice, of how we are led to witness, of the walk of individuals who are led to certain work - we have much to learn and more to understand. Tampa Meeting is growing with new members, new attenders and opportunities such as that afforded by a marriage coming under the care of our meeting. The simple ceremony, in the manner of Friends, celebrating the marriage commitment was aglow with joy and love. We continue to be blessed as the spirit of this couple’s love for one another enriches our community. We are blessed by the gifts of ministry shared in our Meeting for Worship as well as in offerings such as the laying of a labyrinth in our back yard. We heartily enjoy sharing our property responsibilities through specially called workdays as well as in spontaneous offerings such as the midweek building of new picnic tables, or the individual effort constantly applied to wrestling the incredibly prolific potato vine. Informal gatherings for fellowship, such as Friendly dinners at individuals’ homes, have strengthened our personal relationships and afforded opportunity for much laughter and sharing. We find the lengthening of our worship to include a space for joys,

concerns and prayer requests to be shared and held in the Light has been essential to the care and nurture of our community. While our stated time for worship to begin is 10:00am, we often find that worship has begun before the appointed hour as we have settled into the silence in expectant waiting.

Friends continue to struggle with our grief and despair as the war continues. Our witness for peace has taken many forms including vigiling on street corners, visiting legislators, letter writing, radio editorializing and ongoing prayer. We have adopted the FCNL STEP resolution and seek to strengthen our voice with the help and direction of FCNL. We recognize our Meeting for Worship as the foundation of our witness both as individuals and as a community. It is in knowing the peace that passeth understanding that we can envision and work for peace in our world.

Recognizing the necessity for truth and justice in building a foundation for peace, members of our community have stood witness with the Muslim community of Tampa. Offering friendship and support to the Muslim community has been both trying and rewarding. The wider Tampa community has been strained by ongoing trials of “suspected terrorists.” This witness spoke to a concern for integrity and for the just application of the rule of law. It has been a burden to see the mistreatment of the incarcerated and their families, as well as the fear, disrespect and anger that has been directed at the Muslim community in general. Again, the energy required to accompany those seeking justice demands a patient, steadfast, determined presence and we are grateful that our meeting has been able to hold up those who are called to this work. As the acquitted have not been released from prison and may face further prosecution, this concern is

ongoing and we would ask that our Friends be held in the Light as they continue to witness as they are led.

Tampa Meeting held a memorial service on 5, eighth month, the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Standing in downtown Tampa, we were mindful that our candle lanterns floating on our river were mirroring the witness of those who were standing at the riverside in Hiroshima. Our service was conducted in the manner of Friends worship and spoke powerfully to those from our Quaker community and to those from our wider community who participated.

Tampa Friends Meeting continues 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,

Tampa Monthly Meeting