

## TAMPA MONTHLY MEETING 2008 STATE OF THE MEETING REPORT

### What canst thou say?

In our worship together, Tampa Monthly Meeting seeks the guidance, strength and renewal that will enable us as individuals and as a community to “**try what love will do.**” We often find ourselves challenged as we seek to live out our Quaker testimonies in our very troubled world. Yet, time and time again, our worship, work and play together serve to support and guide us. We recognize the blessing that lies in having found such friendship.

Reflection on the past year must start with remembrance of the deep concern for the people of Kenya with which we began this year. Hearing of the distress of Friends in Kenya was heartrending. Watching as Kenyan Friends witnessed for peace with creative and concrete actions was to “**see what love will do.**” We were grateful to be able to support the peacemaking/reconciliation efforts of Kenyan Friends with a donation sent through FUM.

Closer to home, we recognized and acted upon a concern to be able to more concretely support one another by establishing a “Friends In Need Fund”. While initiated earlier in the year, this would appear to have been a timely commitment in support of one another in troubled times. The minute establishing this fund and how it is to be administered can be found on our website, [tampafriends.org](http://tampafriends.org) in the minutes of third month and is entitled Minute 1 Third Month 2008.

Seeking the benefits of experience with our wider Quaker world, Tampa Meeting was fortunate to have the opportunity to support one member in her travel to the FGC Consultation for Worship and Ministry and another in her travel to Pendle Hill for a Child Safety Course. We also enjoyed hosting the SEYM FUM Committee and the SEYM Executive Committee. Quarterly Meetings which invite Friends from St. Petersburg, Sarasota, Ft. Myers, Lake Wales, Clearwater and Tampa to gather are also a gift. Members who serve with Friends Peace Teams, FCNL and SEYM committees strengthen our ties within our religious society.

Our witness in the wider world took many forms. We continue to struggle with our grief and outrage over the continuing violence that is called the war in Iraq and Afghanistan. Friends have found the guidance of FCNL helpful in focusing our efforts to respond. We found our

discernment in helping FCNL set priorities served also to guide us in clarifying our concerns regarding peace, environmental and social issues. Several Friends were active in registering voters and encouraging folks to vote in the November election and found the experience exciting, hopeful and exhausting. It also led those of us who walked our neighborhoods to a stark understanding of the deep poverty that exists in our city. Our involvement locally with the Hillsborough Organization for Progress and Equality led us in a listening project within our Meeting where many community concerns were identified and it could not be overlooked that all were rooted in poverty. We fear for what the recession and fiscal failure in Florida will mean for those brothers and sisters.

Commitment to our spiritual growth led Tampa Friends to meet in Adult First Day school, before Meeting for Worship, on many First Days during this year. As led we have considered topics ranging from “Vocal Ministry” through “Meeting for Healing” to “The Work of Friends Peace Teams in Colombia” and have taken up a deeper examination of our testimonies. Our Adult First Day school sessions are facilitated by any Friend so led. We are open to a broad range of topics and use a wide variety of resources to enhance our discussion. We have found ourselves fed by such sharing and look forward to continuing this practice. In the fall we began a Quakerism 101 study to give an overview of Quakerism to newcomers and to provide

seasoned Friends a time for renewed consideration of our faith and practice. Included in this Q101 study is use of relevant sections of our SEYM Faith & Practice. Concern for our ongoing spiritual growth has also led to committing to and planning for our first Meeting retreat to take place in March of 2009.

Our property continues to serve us well. We do struggle with the continuing need for a better First Day School space. Our Property committee works to seek options within the limitations of city requirements and our finances - both presenting significant challenges. A new roof secures our spiritual home for some time to come but was an unexpected expense. Our one acre yard offers the promise of many work Saturdays to come. The labyrinth which has been a dream and of temporary construct over quite some time came to fruition due to the devotion and hard work of dedicated Friends. It is lovely and nurtures those who find themselves centering in the spirit as they walk in contemplation.

Our commitment to our life as a community and to building that community has led us in a variety of ways. We continue to thoroughly enjoy our monthly Friendly Dinners where we gather in small groups for dinner in one another's homes. As a Meeting we try to be flexible in our commitments and planning, so that we can be more responsive to the needs of our members/attenders in these stressful times. We also continually seek to recognize and support the Quaker witness of the lives of the members/attenders of Tampa Monthly Meeting. We have experienced that this witness may take forms such as trauma healing in a far away country, reaching out to help a stranger in need at the corner grocery, couch surfing the continent or simply being generously patient with one another. We have established an outreach committee to help us discern how to become more visible to the wider community. We are fed by our faith and practice and in our hope to be able to share what we have found with others, we labor under a concern that we have not done enough to help those who are seekers find us. With this in mind, we have acquired a banner identifying Tampa Friends Meeting to be used when we have the opportunity to table at community events. We also have business cards which can be given when we issue an invitation to gather with us to those who ask us about being Quaker. We are careful and intentional in our efforts to be welcoming to all who would worship with us.

Tampa Meeting seeks to be faithful in our witness and to hold one another in tenderness as we remain open to where spirit may lead. We are blessed.

Respectfully submitted,  
Tampa Monthly Meeting