

Tampa Friends Spiritual State of the Meeting 2018

How has our meeting for worship or other meeting activities nurtured our spiritual growth?

Tampa Friends appreciate the diversity of spiritual experience present in our worship. When attentive and listening deeply with open heart, we are often blessed as a common thread emerges to feed and nurture us on our spiritual journey. We believe the foundation for this corporate experience is sustained by the active, consistent participation of Friends in our Adult First Day Program and mid-week Spiritual Reflection gathering where our diverse experience of spiritual connection is shared through what we study and discuss. Our worship never feels empty even when silent and we often feel keenly the movement of Spirit in the depth of this silence. While we seldom have a less-gathered worship or 'popcorn' meeting, we recognize that we sometimes arrive restless in spirit which results in less opportunity for centered worship.

Testimony was offered by a Friend about how Meeting has sustained him in his efforts to be spiritually faithful in his life. Seeking with a clearness committee helped with making important decisions in moving forward on a challenging career path. Being loved and held by our spiritual community continues to sustain this Friend.

In considering this query we are led to acknowledge the fruits of the spirit that intentional effort and commitment by Tampa Friends have borne and are renewed in continuing to seek spiritual growth.

Where do you find hope in the Meeting and in our spiritual life?

Hope is found in the darkest of times in our spiritual grounding and spiritual growth. Our faith is nurtured by the new members, and perhaps even more so, through the grace-filled transitions of Quakers passing on before us.

Hope lies in welcoming newcomers and in their presence we find an affirmation of our efforts to be a spiritual home to those who are led to the Quaker path. It is also through the presence of the visitor, the newcomer, that we find our efforts to clearly be an open and affirming community: clarified, tested, strengthened, and hopeful.

Tampa Friends are blessed when newer members come forward and serve our community. We recognize and are deeply grateful to those who have been steadfast in their work and witness and know that those coming forward offer peace of mind and release to Friends who must lay down some of their commitments of our life together.

We also find hope in the ties we have with those who can only be in relationship through occasional visits. Their reappearance, no matter how infrequent, is a joyful opportunity and again, affirms our efforts to be a welcoming community.

Hope also lies in our continuing commitment to our physical presence. We can literally see the hope of growth in our trees and the continuing transformation of our grounds. Each new property work day, improvement, or project manifests hope as we seek to maintain and create the vessel to welcome and include all who come to Tampa Friends Meeting.

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What would we like meeting to be to meet our needs and the needs of those who would attend meeting?

We would dearly like to have more families with children in attendance and we steadfastly maintain a First Day School structure to welcome those who appear. We continue to seek ways to reach out to families.

We would like to raise awareness of the purpose and function of clearness committees. Clearness committees offer a process for spirit led discernment to help one work through a possible leading or concern. It helps us to be supportive of one another through life's challenges.

Quakerism 101 would be a good program to help us all, newcomers and longtime Quakers, seek deeper understanding of Quaker process and why we do what we do.

The Tampa Meeting Retreat in January is an important event to help clarify this query in regard to our desire to be more diverse and inclusive.

Concern raised - How do we encourage those who are fed by weekly spiritual reflection gathering to become part of our Quaker meeting worship and corporate effort to be Spirit led?

We recognize and celebrate that we offer diverse entry to the Quaker path through a variety of weekly and monthly activities.

How has our meeting given witness to love within our meeting, in our communities, and in our world?

Tampa Friends are intentional and committed to being clear in words and action that all are welcome, accepted, and loved. We do so in gratitude to all who come to us for offering the opportunity to practice what we profess.

We present to ourselves, community, and world as seekers who recognize our spiritual life to be a faith path. We recognize a common purpose in our desire to be faithful and open to a deeper understanding of who we are and who we can be. We understand that we can each access our measure of the Light and it is vital to share what we have been given to help one another in this faith journey.

We are grateful to have a welcoming space available to meetings and groups, such as Friends World Committee for Consultation, Southeastern Yearly Meeting Executive Committee, Alcoholics Anonymous, and the Bridge. Collecting books for school children and adopting a Christmas family offer opportunities we appreciate. The concerts that we are able to host in our worship space often introduce first-time visitors to the Quaker meeting in Tampa.

The love and care for one another in Meeting and beyond was again exemplified for those present for the memorial service held for Tom Blackburn.

We rise in Spirit to face the deep concerns of our world and this sustains those of us who attend to the broken places. We seek to be faithful in our commitment to non-

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violence and tenderness recognizing that there is no other path to the world we seek. Through our worship and work together we are able to access a strength of purpose and fierceness of Spirit to do whatever witness to which we are called as individuals and community.