

## **Tampa Monthly Meeting Spiritual State of the Meeting Report 2020 and 2021**

On January 30, 2022, Friends from Tampa Monthly Meeting gathered to share their views and feelings on the Spiritual State of our Meeting for the past two years. Nearly all Friends spoke of the difficulty of isolation and absence of Meeting for Worship during the initial stages of the pandemic. Many Friends also experienced periods of mourning and loss throughout Covid and spoke about how the absence of corporate worship initially added to that loss.

Some Friends felt that meeting had not met their spiritual needs but continued to query whether this might be true for many as we have lost attenders during this time. Others also felt a spiritual loss but seemed to hold themselves responsible.

One Friend spoke of Tampa Meeting as her grounding point, that without Tampa Meeting's support she couldn't do what she does with other Quaker groups. When she has a problem, she talks to other Tampa Quakers, and they help get her back to the center and find a way to approach the situation with a different spirit or attitude.

One Friend found that the online worship-sharing format of Adult First Day activities work well for her and help her sit better with things away from meeting in a listening way and wait to move forward. Another friend believes she has seen spirit at work in meeting when others have expressed her very thoughts. Another Friend spoke of her resistance to online worship and avoided participation until a different Friend encouraged her to at least give it a try. She also strongly stated, "This is my community. These are my Friends, and I want to be with them."

Throughout this threshing session, there was deep appreciation expressed for those Friends who stepped forward and refused to let go of the need for this Beloved Community. Various individual Friends contributed in hugely important ways to keep us together. One set up an account so that we could worship online together. He led us when many of us were lost in fear and grief; he helped us realize that we needed to organize and evaluate our current strengths and weaknesses and choose how to move forward. From this came our Way Forward Committee which ended up including anyone, member or attender, who chose to join us in weekly meetings to examine the status of our Meeting, the good the bad and the ugly.

Out of these meetings came new purpose along with a new organizational structure for our now smaller Meeting. An individual was asked to take over as Interim Clerk for our meeting and she did. Then she agreed to continue for a three-year term. Another individual stepped up the level of work done on our weekly email newsletter; this was done despite the fact that she was tired of doing a newsletter and greatly wanted to pass this task on to another Friend. We later began to pick up the pieces of our Adult First Day Program. We have taken steps to work co-operatively with other organizations in community outreach, and we look forward to hosting an inter-faith community picnic. We are excited about resuming community music concerts and meeting potlucks. A Friend from the past has rejoined us for worship, and at least one new attender has been heavily involved recently.

It seems that while our numbers are diminished, our spirit is strong and our caring for our Beloved Community continues.