

Tampa Monthly Meeting State of the Meeting Report 2006

Tampa Friends welcome this opportunity to share our reflections on our journey as seekers in the Religious Society of Friends. We continue to seek to ground our spiritual journey in our worship and work together. We welcome a number of newcomers to Quakerism to regular attendance in our worship. Their seeking and deep listening invite us to revisit our history, to explore our faith more deeply, to attend to and hone our practice, and to discern what work we as individuals and as a monthly meeting are called to today. In the Light, we have gathered together in meeting for worship, in adult First Day school, in young Friends First Day school, in meeting for worship with a concern for business, in strenuous Saturday work days, in Friendly pot-lucks, and in a variety of committee meetings. All are attended with much joy and pleasure in the opportunity to be together and in the spirit of seeking to be a blessed community.

In this year, we have received a new Friend, Francis Drake, into membership with joy. We transferred the membership of a recorded member, Doug Brown, who has not been with us in many years, to Bethesda Meeting and we're happy to know that he and his family have found another home within our Religious Society. We continue to hold in the Light Friend Bill Greenleaf, who at age 90 is failing and will likely not be with us in the near future. (Dear Bill left us on January 15th, 2007 as this report was being completed.) Bill is fondly remembered by several "children" in their twenties for his energy, kindness, patience and skill at keeping them out of trouble with lively, endless games of red light, green light. He and his wife Sue also served Friends faithfully in the founding of SEYM, including Bill's presiding as clerk, 1955-1958, for the Southeastern Friends Conference, the precursor to Southeastern Yearly Meeting.

Our First Day has been enriched by the addition of adult First Day school at 9:00am. Many of us have been pleased and a bit surprised to find that our energy allows us to attend Adult First Day school at 9am, meeting for worship at 10am, enjoy coffee, treats and fellowship and then continue on into another scheduled presentation or some type of meeting business at 11:45. This seems to speak to the intentional way in which Friends in Tampa are seeking together to deepen our spiritual life. We do feel blessed to be on this journey together.

We must testify to our continued support of Friend Cecilia Yocum in her work for Friends Peace Teams in Rwanda. This work is challenging and not without cost both personal and financial. Tampa Friends continue to fulfill our commitment of support to both aspects of Cece's work. Responding to a concern brought forward by Cece, adult First Day school spent time with many different writings in prayerful discernment on the subject of suffering, specifically on the concern of how one whose work involves witnessing much hardship and suffering can be supported, can be strengthened, can continue to do that work and not be damaged by the anger one carries at being able to do so little to right such injustice. Sharing that this work is not without joy, Cece invited us to spend a First Day afternoon dyeing scarves for her to take and share with Rwandan Friends who use them in their work as AVP facilitators. We ask that Friends hold in the Light Cece and all those who gather with her in Rwanda in January of 2007 as they continue the work of Friends Peace Teams. Again, we feel blessed to be on this journey together.

Supporting meeting members and attenders in strengthening their spiritual life and their witness is an opportunity we welcome. To this end we have established a Travel & Learning fund in the amount of

\$1200. We especially encourage members and attenders to use this fund to seek out opportunities for growth and education through experiences in our wider Quaker world. In this way we were able to support the journey of two Friends to Pendle Hill to attend a gathering focused on the work of Peace & Social concerns committees. We know such experience will enrich the life of our meeting and look forward to encouraging more Friends to access this opportunity in the coming year.

The ongoing war continues to burden our hearts and we were grateful to be able to speak out through facilitating the Code Pink program that brought Iraqi doctor, Dr. Entisar Ariabi, to Tampa in March. A pharmacist in Baghdad, who was then working in the hospital there, she was able to share her stories with the press, with staff members of Senators Nelson and Martinez and with citizens in a forum held at USF. Her stories then, in March, were very hard to hear. We fear for what may have happened to her and her family since that time as the situation has worsened. We pray for an end to this suffering and violence and see no possibility of relief through further military action. We continue to use the expertise of FCNL in focusing our efforts to speak truth to the power that has chosen this path. We would invite all Friends in SEYM to also join the work of FCNL. We need more voices!

While the war is a shadow that haunts us daily, we are aware that there is much work to be done in our community and our country on social justice and environmental issues. To this end we continue to work with and support the Hillsborough Organization for Progress and Equality that brings together the voices of many congregations whose members voices often aren't heard in our community. This year a successful effort was made to have several bus routes extend their hours of operation to better accommodate working people who depend on the buses for transportation. The coming year will see action taken on the expanding concern of homelessness. We continue to carry a concern for the devastating effects of hurricane Katrina and are grateful for the work and witness of Friends who acted upon this concern in work with the Friends Disaster Service in Bogalusa, Louisiana and with the Mennonite Disaster Service in Bayou La Batre, Alabama. We are excited that a Quaker Earthcare Witness committee is being formed in our Yearly Meeting and look forward to our Meeting representatives accessing this opportunity to act on our concerns for our environment. Our property continues to offer us opportunity to act on that witness as well. Our efforts this year included installing a rain barrel, beginning work on landscaping that is environmentally sensitive and sensible, and applying a reflective coating to our shingle roof which reduced our electric consumption by 25%.

This report is an attempt to share how Tampa Friends Meeting has been called and how we have attempted to respond in this past year. We continue to seek to act with integrity and to witness to our faith in a manner that speaks clearly to all we encounter. As we look to the coming year we are mindful of the advice of early Friends, may it guide us in what lies before us.

“Our Religious Society endures as a community of friends who take thought for outward society by first taking care of one another. Friends are advised to maintain love and unity, to avoid tale-bearing and detraction, and to settle differences promptly and in a manner free from resentment and all forms of inward violence. Live affectionately as friends, entering with sympathy into the joys and sorrows of one another’s daily lives. Visit one another. Be alert to give help and ready to receive it. Bear the burdens of one another’s failings; share the buoyancy of one another’s strengths.”

PYM Faith&Practice - Advice paraphrased from the Epistles of the Yearly Meeting of Pennsylvania and the Jerseys, 1694 and 1695

