

Ministry and Worship Annual Report, 2013

In 2013, Ministry and Worship continued its efforts to enhance the experience of worship in FMW's multiple Meetings for Worship. Earlier actions taken to include children more meaningfully into Worship were built upon as the year progressed. Additionally, the modifications that changed the latecomer's policy of the 10:30 a.m. larger Meeting for Worship seemed to settle well with Friends. The committee also made changes to the Head of Meeting schedule. Previously, only committees or task forces could serve as Head of Meeting. Towards the end of the year, we invited the individuals or informal groups that felt led to participate to have the ability to serve in a Head of Meeting role.

Preparation of the annual Spiritual State of the Meeting report was particularly arduous this year, in part, because our community provided a wealth of heartfelt comment. As is always the case, the Committee deeply appreciated a truthful and revealing account of our Meeting's Spiritual state. The Meeting came to unity on the report in May. We will begin the process anew as 2013 turns to 2014.

To help welcome newcomers and inquirers, the literature rack was updated, a welcome packet was completed, and other outreach materials were either revised or obtained. Many existing materials were made more visible. As the year moved toward its conclusion, we oversaw Memorial Meetings for four Friends, including beloved members Bill Cousins and Sara Satterthwaite.

For several months our committee considered eldering and spirit-led vocal ministry. Friends' practice, expression, and conduct often create spiritual challenges. In partnership with the Healing and Reconciliation Committee, we convened a meeting to consider eldering. The Meeting, in part, deliberated as to how it might more carefully be undertaken as a gentle correction, not a public scolding. Minutes from this meeting were shared far and wide. We concluded that individual and collective reflection would continue in pursuit of deeper understanding and Spirit-led compassion within our community.

During the year we were mindful that our Meeting is large, diverse and spiritually active – with five worship opportunities each week, and a variety of study groups, spiritual gatherings and called Meetings for Worship. Our committee celebrates and supports all these opportunities. They provide different pathways for spiritual growth through a variety of practices and formats, each in response to the needs and preferences of our members and attenders.

In several ways over the year, our committee gave special attention to FMW's diversity. After careful consideration and consultation with regular attendees, the committee decided to continue a long-standing special welcome for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender worshipers at our 10:30 a.m. Quaker House Living Room Meeting for Worship. This particular Meeting for

Worship has recently decided to compile its own history to share alongside a previously published FMW history.

To help enhance our spiritual community and, in particular, to foster intergenerational activities, the committee also has revived the practice of inviting individuals to share their personal spiritual journeys. Two sessions were held in 2013 and more are planned. The experience has been profoundly moving and enlightening. Our committee deeply appreciates all those who have participated in this direct exercise of Quaker Ministry and we look forward to additional spiritual journey sharing. We find that when Friends from many generations join together, the accounts and stories voiced are richer and more gratifying to all who hear them.

Going into 2014, the committee will continue efforts to nurture spiritual well being. It will address additional ways to welcome all seekers, individuals of all ages, those with special needs, and those with difficult histories. We also will continue to give attention to Spirit-led vocal ministry and eldering as elements of Quaker practice which are of particular concern at FMW. None of these efforts can or should be addressed by Ministry and Worship alone. Concerns such as these are everyone's responsibility. We look forward to working with other committees, established Friends, and new seekers alike as we move forward.