

SPIRITUAL STATE OF THE MEETING REPORT, 2018

This year the Spiritual State of the Meeting was conducted through gatherings of worship sharing. Over the years, from time to time, the committee has used surveys to analyze the spiritual state of the meeting. This year it was obvious we had a very low turnout of those who participated in the worship sharing. The Ministry and Worship Committee is tasked with preparing and presenting the Spiritual State of the Meeting Report however, it is the responsibility of all Friends to participate in this process. Inherent in any process, particularly one with a small, self-selected group of respondents, is the possibility of missing important themes or over-emphasizing views that are not widely held. The Ministry and Worship Committee continues to discuss ways to engage Friends at our meeting in the SSOM process.

We focused on our worship together and our experience of community within Friends Meeting of Washington. Several common themes emerged which are reported here. Friends' experience and concern with the various Meetings for Worship, recent conflict and disturbances, our building project, and social action were shared.

A Friend observed that there are a significant number of young people who attend Friends Meeting of Washington. The Friend thinks this is important. "Young people change the character of the meeting," said the Friend. Another Friend remarked that there was a sense of joy when the children join us for worship and this Friend said the presence of the children is a blessing. Another Friend was impressed by the support we give the children at FMW.

Several Friends concurred that committees are a huge part of the spiritual life of FMW. Committee work is important and contributes to the spiritual life of the meeting, Friends said. "It is important to be on a committee. It is how the meeting functions. It is how one gets involved." one Friend said. Another Friend shared that there is a great strength to the FMW community now. There is activism and people are involved with various social causes these days.

Friends discussed our worship together at FMW over the last year. There has been some conflict and change within the last several months. One Friend noted that we now have 6 separate Meetings for Worship at FMW. The most recently added Meeting for Worship came into existence to address and resolve a recent conflict. The new Meeting for Worship has now taken on a life of its own. "All our Meetings for Worship shouldn't be the same, each Meeting for Worship has its own characteristics" a Friend said. However, more than one Friend wondered if the newest Meeting for Worship will survive? A friend stated that the latest Meeting for Worship will survive but only if there is energy behind it. "The uncomfortable things that happen are a sign of some good which will come" another Friend said regarding conflict in the meeting. Other Friends also remarked on the various Meetings for Worship at FMW.

A Friend noted that there has been a "spiritual deepening" in the last several months since disturbances at Meeting for Worship, in the Meeting Room at 10:30, have been addressed. The goal of our worship is to be "gathered and deep", a Friend shared. Other

Friends agreed that it is a good thing to have Meetings for Worship which have different characteristics and numbers of those who worship together. “Different People have different needs” a Friend remarked speaking to the different Meetings for Worship at FMW. Although, another Friend observed that “...we are not meant to be a home for everyone, we are a lay-by for some who come to worship with us.”

Although the FMW construction project and our social action was not a specific topic of the worship sharing for the Spiritual State of the Meeting, Friends were led to share their concerns and thoughts.

The building project has gotten people “disturbed” and it is a part of the upheaval we have been experiencing one Friend said. “We cannot be a part of a community which is only about a building project” one Friend said. “We should be both about social action and a building project” another Friend said. One Friend raised a concern about whether our involvement with social issues will “flourish”? “Having to pay a mortgage is a huge part of what we have to do for the next 20 years. What will this do to our meeting” a Friend said and asked, “What is our dream for the next 20 years?” It was pointed out that the construction project leads to the vibrancy of the meeting because Friends see a future here at FMW. In addition, the growing meetings in Baltimore Yearly Meeting are those under construction, a Friend noted.

“What keeps us together at FMW? Is it the construction project or our social action? Or is it the reason for why we are undergoing a building project and for our social action?” a Friend said. One Friend concluded by stating that within the Religious Society of Friends, we value listening. The Friend said “I look forward to holding that value in The Light because we will be tested by the commercial aspect of what we are doing and our social action. Listening will be important to us as we move through the next 20 years.”