

Homewood Meeting Spiritual State of the Meeting, 2018

Meetings for worship at Homewood are the center of our life as a spiritual community. They are deeply grounded in silent worship that is enriched by spirit-led vocal ministry. Our opening statement, read at the beginning of each Meeting serves to remind Friends about what meeting for worship is all about. *"In worship we enter into stillness of body and mind in order to feel that (radically loving) spirit within us and among us, to give ourselves over to it and to discern what it would have us do."* Attendance at meeting for worship has continued to grow this past year, with about 45 present for worship on any given First Day. A simple lunch following worship is a vitally important opportunity for fostering fellowship afterwards.

This year we were delighted to welcome Ellyn Ross and Janet Abrams, who transferred their memberships to Homewood. At a memorial meeting, we celebrated the life of Noelle Zeltzman, a beloved Homewood member of over 50 years. Her legacy at Homewood was one of nurturing many generations of children, always engaging them with the arts. We also held a memorial meeting for Grayson Fell, a nephew of one of our attenders, who died as a newborn.

Young adult friends now constitute a significant and growing percentage of our attendance at meeting. They host a well-attended monthly pot-luck. We celebrate the many young adults coming to Homewood who are finding sustenance in our worship. We marvel that Homewood is becoming a place to meet other young adults!

In the past year Homewood offered various opportunities to deepen our faith. The most significant was a 1.5 day spiritual retreat facilitated by Christopher Sammond of Poplar Ridge Monthly Meeting (New York) that was attended by 28 individuals, many of whom were relative newcomers. Through the retreat, participants engaged in activities to deepen their worship and their connection with the Spirit. Six Homewood Friends participated in the BYM Spiritual Formation program and formed a small Homewood worship group that continues to meet. Our monthly Quaker Book Club continued with a small group of regular participants, discussing texts regarding aspects of Quaker faith. Once a month before meeting for worship, Homewood offers the opportunity to participate in a guided meditation, Experiment with Light, which is thought to evoke the worship experience of early Friends. Hymn singing, also offered once a month before worship, is thoroughly enjoyed by a small group that participates.

Homewood offered an engaging children's curriculum that included plays and puppet shows; trips to Adelphi Friends Meeting and Catoctin Quaker Camp; service projects preparing food and making care kits for people experiencing homelessness and trash pick-up, and guidance in mindfulness through "singing bowl" activities. About 6 to 8 children of varying ages attend on any given First Day out of the 14 children who regularly attend Homewood. We are grateful to the dedicated group of adults in our meeting who faithfully serve our children.

For many, worship and engagement at Homewood includes concerns for social justice. Friday evening vigils in front of the meetinghouse have continued and serve to witness to the community our belief that "Black Lives Matter" and "We Are All One People." The response by those driving by is often enthusiastic and thankful. Our Peace and Social Justice committee sponsored well-attended videos (*13th* and *Voices from the Holy Land*), with discussion afterwards.

The committee supported work in Baltimore City related to Unified Efforts (a youth program that focuses on anti-bullying and peace building efforts), the dedication of the Harriet Tubman Garden, and Baltimore Ceasefire 365 (a movement to end murder in Baltimore). Homewood Friends participate weekly in court watch where they track aspects of criminal justice proceedings that contribute to inequity in incarceration. Once a month, a group of Friends gathers at Homewood to hold in the light people in Baltimore City who have been affected by violence.

Others have been led to witness and work for earth care. Our Green Organizing Action Team (GOAT) wrote and received a \$5000 grant from Chesapeake Bay Trust to remove sod and plant a pollinator friendly garden on the south side of the meetinghouse, and to install water collection cisterns, and a \$1000 grant from One Water Partnership for environmental outreach and education. The meetinghouse was part of a tour for the One Water Partnership featuring our solar panels. The committee has organized a recycling program for small electronics. GOAT has also been very active in legislative advocacy, particularly for the Maryland Clean Energy Jobs Act.

In last year's Spiritual State of the Meeting report, we articulated a desire for *"greater diversity within our worship community, more opportunities for connection with each other and more effective ways of communicating our faith to newcomers."* We have experienced some progress this past year in meeting this goal.

An ad hoc Outreach Committee began meeting this past year and initiated several activities to both better communicate our faith and attract a more diverse community. Several sessions were held weekday evenings which featured Friends General Conference "Quaker Speak" videos and discussion about Quakerism. During the Pride parade this past summer, about 40 Homewood members and attenders marched or stood on the front steps in solidarity. Pamphlets on Quakerism for visitors were reviewed and reorganized, and welcoming signage outside was added. The Outreach Committee sponsored a Friendly Eights potluck program, where new and longstanding members and attenders joined together in homes to become more deeply acquainted. Homewood's Working Group for the Arts sponsored several events—film showings and art exhibits, which attracted individuals from the wider community to visit Homewood. Homewood welcomed those in addiction recovery by sponsoring regular support meetings.

We still have plenty of room to grow and enrich our Meeting. We continue to long for the racially and ethnically diverse community we envision. In this regard we seek greater light, discernment, unity, resolve, and action. Despite our efforts to provide a well-rounded First Day School program for children, we have yet to attract more families with children. We also recognize the need to be more inclusive for persons with different abilities. Another significant challenge for us is to find ways to incorporate the many new attenders at Homewood into the fabric of our community.

In the past year, Homewood Friends Meeting has been a vibrant faith community characterized by deep worship, communication of our beliefs to others, and active witness about social and environmental concerns. The growth of attenders, particularly the many young adults, is truly exciting--a vision realized. As we continue our intentional efforts to deepen our faith and broaden our community, we hope to engage more people in the multi-faceted, spiritual work of sustaining, supporting, and growing Homewood Friends Meeting and our work in the world.