

2015 Morningside State of the Meeting Report

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law (Galatians 5:22-23)

On December 20, 2015, Members and Attenders of Morningside Meeting met to consider the spiritual state of the Meeting over the past year. In keeping with the Yearly Meeting theme, “What is the Spiritual State of the Meeting,” the convener presented the gathering with two queries: “Where are the fruits?” and “Where are we not producing fruit?”

Where are the fruits?

Morningside is a lively meeting blessed with the gift of humor. We tell our stories to each other; we continue to transform, to be stretched, and to find courage. Our fourth Sunday breakfast continues to generate conversations that connect us. Attending the breakfasts is a good way not to be the new kid on the block; eating together as one family, even though we don’t live next door to each other.

As more families with children continue to attend, the Morningside family has a growing number of small Friends. Meeting for Children—a Morningside term for child care and 1st Day School—has become an increasingly important part of the Meeting. It has deepened worship as we better learn how to “listen to what each child wants from us in the moment” and to better hear a “small piece of what we are.”

Our Retreat was a manifestation of our ability to be a family that cares for its members and honestly share stories. Spiritual Nurture groups give us another chance to “step off the cliff with members of the group.” We “share a common framework for how we see ourselves in the world and how we engage with others.” We engage with sincerity, truly listening to one other. Although we may “struggle with our love for each other, there is a deep abiding love amongst us,” because we believe that there is God in all of us “trying to act accordingly.”

Morningsiders care for each other as they care for others outside of Meeting. The Meeting has an on-going commitment to social justice through which we “enter into relationships that demonstrate our faith in people’s ability to transform themselves by listening to the Inner Light within. In our shared commitment to Restorative Justice, for example, we “come to terms with the potential of God in each person.”

Spirituality in the form of action comes from individuals, and we support one another’s leadings to action. Peace and Social Concerns is an expansion and a support of those individual leadings. We also support Quaker organizations outside of our Meeting. We show up and contribute to the Quarter, participating beyond our proportional numbers. We provide scholarships for the attendance of Quaker gatherings. This year scholarships for Friends of color were especially appreciated.

Where are we not producing fruit?

We need to bring what we have to the world with passion.

We need to take our introductory discussions of Quakerism to a level beyond Quakerism 101 where we can challenge each other.

We also need to become more flexible in listening to potential members of our family. Middle-aged professionals are coming to Meeting and staying, but the millennials are not. We need to be more flexible, considering what would be a better time to reach younger people.

There has been a problem with communications in some committees. There is an expectation that we be trustworthy with one another. It's an expectation that isn't always met. We need to be committed to what we say we are going to do. When we are asked to do a job, we need to ask ourselves, "Do I have the time?"

An elephant is in the room: leadership is changing; how we work is changing; people are more mobile. We are moving from an oral tradition (sense of evolution, memory) to an electronic mode. There are new spiritual opportunities but also challenges for us. How do we hold ourselves accountable?

We need to move out of our "comfortable bedroom slippers." Naming the elephant in the room builds trust and shows that we are living into wholeness.

Pruning Vines for New Fruit

We are in a time of transition from more experienced older members—who have other concerns at this moment—to younger and less experienced members and attenders. We see new faces and something is happening. We need to trust the Spirit to create the spaces that wear new faces.

Sadness has appeared because age, illness and death, all present within in a certain age group that we need to address. In all of this it is important to place our growth in perspective. Historically Friends have always been in transition, always had newbies, weighty Friends, people in the middle, new Friends coming and old Friends going.

From our pruning and care for one another in the Spirit we are assured of new fruits in the future, new families and new communities, new rejoicings and new life in a family called Morningside.