

2014 Morningside State of the Meeting January 4, 2015

On Sunday, December 21, members and attenders of Morningside Meeting gathered to examine 2014 in order to produce the annual “State of the Meeting Report.” After a period of worship and guided by two queries and the section on state of the meeting reports in *NYYM Faith and Practice*¹, members shared their personal views.

This year we have become more relaxed with ‘what Quakerism is’ and more accepting of ourselves. We realize that it is OK to come out with new ideas and it is OK to fail as we don’t have to do it alone. In June we had an indoor picnic with much laughter and silliness. “Being kids again” brought us closer to one another.

As a community, we are rich in our ability to give and receive hospitality in and out of Meeting. A number of male and female “chefs” provide hospitality to Morningsiders and guests. We are uplifted by the arrival of new members and attenders as they give us a “sense of strength and growth.” We are trying to get to know less familiar friends better, “being human and real friends.” We continue with a Fourth Sunday breakfast paid for by Ministry and Council where we are able to become better acquainted with new arrivals and old Friends. Responding to a request from Flushing Meeting and Yearly Meeting, we visited and attended worship at Flushing Meeting House. We provided hospitality at Fall Sessions, and in the summer, worked at the Quarterly Meeting Friend’s Cemetery in Brooklyn to express hospitality for Friends who came before us.

Committees have been fruitful this year and committee members expressed the fun of participating in them. The Communication Committee came “together more strongly” and developed a new web site; throughout the year Peace and Social Concerns provided well attended programs on social issues; because of the work of the Finance Committee and the generosity of members and attenders, we were able to provide financial support to almost 40 organizations; and Ministry and Counsel provided resources for the maintenance of quality worship that helps us feel “grounded and stable.”

In spite of the strong work of the committees, however, there has been some lack of coordination and follow through by members and committees. The wrong chairs are regularly delivered to Meeting for Worship; we had difficulty producing a correct member and attender address list; and the newsletter that “connected the Meeting to people” is still not available.

Low attendance at the May Prison Worship Groups Meetings Reunion and a difficulty in finding a contact person on the Morningside Prison Committee for Woodbourne Worship Group Business was noted. Only half the Meeting, a “mostly white-haired group,” stays after Worship for Business Meeting or P&SC regular or budget Meeting. While continuing to support dedicated white haired Friends, we need to reach out to students,

¹ New York Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends, *Faith and Practice: The Book of Discipline of the New York Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends* (New York: New York Yearly Meeting, 2001), 125.

young families, and younger attenders and Members, and provide a space for them to meet without sacrificing what we have. Inclusion is essential for the health and growth of Business Meeting and the Meeting on the whole and all Morningsiders need to feel that they are needed.

One barometer for inclusion is Worship and the depth and diversity of vocal ministry. This year we have seen the increase in vocal ministry by more than a few Friends—— although a concern was expressed that more messages are being given more often in After-Words than during the first hour of Worship.

The quality of worship is deepened through preparation and Meeting provides a wide range of resources for spiritual growth. Peace and Social Concerns integrates silence and action into a spiritual whole by providing discussions on social issues. M&C has been very present this year through a number of Support and Clearness Committees and 4th Sunday Discussions. 2nd Sunday Bible Study before Meeting for Worship is helping to “ground people entering into worship.” Spiritual nurture groups that meet regularly in Friends’ homes (“growing and evolving together”) provide the experience of studying and sharing with others over an extended length of time. More individual practices, such as Spiritual friendships and mentorships allow for individual and personal growth. Recommendations for readings from our Librarian are always available to groups and to the Meeting.

Committee work is another recognized form of spiritual development at Morningside. We have emphasized that by renaming childcare to Meeting for Children and seek to use the phrase Meeting for Worship with a concern for Business when referring to our business meetings. Many Morningsiders are spiritually fed outside the Meeting through active participation in FGC and NYYM, and Meeting offers financial assistance to assure that all members and attenders are able to attend yearly gatherings. Individual members are creative in discovering resources for Spiritual enrichment outside of meeting. One Friend told how involvement in a Non-theist worship group email list has been helpful in his own spiritual development.

Spiritual development leads to quality worship which leads to worshipful action in the world. Friends take stands and act according to individual leadings. The leadings may remain with the individual or they may become corporate leadings of the entire Meeting. In any case, they are witnesses of the Spirit to the world.

Morningsiders have long played an active role in prison reform, and take special joy in being able to support programs like Breathing Space, a place for formerly incarcerated to reintegrate into society. Meeting continues to hold Woodbourne Prison Worship Group under its care and members of that worship group are beginning to feel more connected and part of this Meeting. In May, we hosted a Prison Worship Groups Reunion followed by a potluck. A presentation and discussion was held on “Hope Lives for Lifers”—— which includes sentence planning for people with long term sentences——and another session was presented on Restorative Justice.

In June, Morningside Meeting approved a minute asking Governor Cuomo to support the changes in the use of solitary confinement as proposed in the HALT Solitary Confinement Act. This minute was forwarded to the New York Quarterly Meeting with the request that Quarterly Meeting approve the minute and forward it on to New York Yearly Meeting for approval.

In April, Morningside passed a minute to authorize the signing of the Second Flushing Remonstrance, along with the Flushing Interfaith Council and Friends Committee for Black Concerns of NYYM. The first remonstrance, written in 1657, defended Quakers who were persecuted for gathering in worship. The Second Remonstrance Against Racial and Religious Profiling denounces the NYPD program of “Stop and Frisk.”

In December, we held an Amnesty International Global Write-a-thon on behalf of prisoners of conscience. The letter signing was followed by participation in the International Human Rights Sabbath with a worship sharing about beginnings and radical hospitality.

In addition to the stands by the Meeting as a whole were several Individuals or groups Stands or Actions taken throughout the year, including the Peoples’ Climate March in September (for which many provided hospitality to participants from outside the area) and the August anti-police brutality march in Staten Island originally organized around the death of Eric Garner. In June, several Morningsiders marched and carried a banner in the Gay Pride Day Parade.

Participation in Gay Pride is an expression of our support for families, whatever form they take. Since 1987, with the passing of a minute approving same sex union under the care of Meeting, Morningside developed a broad understanding of what constitutes a marriage and a family. Families in all shapes and sizes make Morningside their home. The commitment to support is shown in our Marriage Committees, one of which has met with the couple for over twelve years. With an increase in the number of young families at Morningside, we have been blessed with more children, and an adult who works with them expressed the development of “mutual appreciation” between Friends, regardless of age.

In the circle of this year, Morningside witnessed a new birth, added three new members, provided spiritual nurturance to a wide range of ages, incorporated ARCH Meetings to share ways of handling aging, and said goodbye to a member who died on April 4, 2014 and was buried in the Brooklyn Friends Cemetery.

One Friend spoke of his passing with a combination of distress and joy which reflects the state of Morningside Meeting. Although it was distressing to say, it was a joy that Morningside was able to provide him with transportation, food, companionship, and a final place of rest.

In Friendship,