

Fresh Pond Monthly Meeting 2016 State of Society Report

Prompting Queries:

1. What are we grateful for? What gifts of grace have we experienced in the life of our meeting community through the past year?
2. Where could we, as a meeting, have been more open to learning, growing and serving each other in our meeting and the wider community?
3. What unfed hungers do we feel in our community life?
4. How is our meeting being led to do the work of the Spirit?

2016 has been a year of significant community development in Fresh Pond. We have noticed this both in terms of how we relate to one another and how our members have discerned how to act within and beyond the meeting community. We have spent energy and time on questions of ministry and supporting it as well as engaging extensively beyond the meeting, being called into activism and protest. Some of this work has been ongoing, but it seems that now more people are being called into it.

Our meetings for worship continue to be very settled. Some are entirely silent, while others have a handful of messages that allow for lots of time for reflection and introspection. It is not rare for the sound of a baby or two to interrupt the silence and these tiny voices are reminders of the ways in which our meeting is growing. We have noted that when visitors or guests worship with us they will often stay to connect with us afterwards. We hope that this has something to do with the ways in which our worship is deep and grounded.

Programmatically, much that we began last year has borne fruit and enriched our community and spiritual life. We are in our second year of “Fresh Pond Circles,” our small groups that meet once a month for discussion and fellowship. They have expanded to include more members and attenders this year and have led to a deeper sense of community and spiritual well-being. We have also continued to develop our programming for all ages. This has included a new curriculum at First Day School as well as continuing our practices of baby welcoming, monthly potlucks, teen breakfasts, and care packages for students in college. This increase in community interaction and the response within our meeting has been one of our greatest gift of grace this year; it has allowed us to both exist as a community developing our own spiritual growth and serve as Friends who are led to witness our beliefs to the world at large. More than simply “allow” for it though, our sense is that our deep commitment to one another is directly tied to the ways in which we are being called into action beyond the meeting.

In service, we have been deeply led to actions stemming from concerns brought forth to the meeting. Members of our community have taken in a refugee and we were able to fundraise money for her first semester of nursing school. Fresh Pond members have been attending a number of community events and marches and bringing our banner to increase our visibility within the community. As a meeting we are being increasingly led to engage beyond the meeting world via demonstrations, donations, phone calls, and living our lives as Friends witnessing our values. We are opening ourselves as a meeting to a continued examination of our lives and values as Friends as well as how we publicly bear witness to our faith in troubled times.

One of the manifestations of our witness is the meeting’s witness is our Earthcare Concerns Group. This group within the meeting has led us all to more faithfully consider more environmental issues in national and local contexts. The minute we passed in November expresses our unity with the importance of Creation care. That minute affirms

our experience of the truth that we share in our testimony of Stewardship and care for the earth. The work of the Earthcare Concerns Group has led to changes in how we consider our carbon impact and environmental interactions within the meeting. It has also prompted us to begin to consider how we might imaginatively support ministries that are carried by groups of people instead of just one person.

Having minuted our intent for “Corporate Support of Individual Ministries” in 2013, we are now on the growing edge of considering how to more fully name, support, and encourage ministry in all its forms. It seems right that we are grappling with inward issues of concern that are directly tied to ways in which we find ourselves needing to serve beyond the meeting as well. We believe that binding together the inward and the outward serves to strengthen both.

Moving into 2017 we carry a significant sense of need to address race, racism, and the ways in which we might take steps to become a more welcoming community. This concern seems to stem both from a spiritual need to wrestle with these issues and from the contemporary political moment, in which it is clearer than ever that there is a call for service, solidarity, and support for those whose lives and livelihoods are endangered.

We feel blessed this year to have found glimpses of the divine community through our engagement with the Community of God, and we wait in eager anticipation for how we will be further led.