

Fresh Pond Monthly Meeting 2017 State of Society Report

In 2017 Fresh Pond Monthly Meeting focused on harvesting seeds that were planted in previous years, including our community's spiritual growth as well as reaching out into our larger community.

The Fresh Pond Monthly Meeting community is blessed with members and attenders who have gifts in ministry and love. This has been a fruitful year of supporting the ministry of individuals within our meeting. Those members, who have named and supported ministries, provided reports of their outside works to the community. Three of our members received a New England Yearly Meeting Legacy Grant to carry out their ministry. Two new letters of introduction for ministry were approved. The community's support of these ministries is a vital part of Fresh Pond's spiritual life and identity. Fresh Pond Monthly Meeting is committed to continue naming, supporting, and encouraging ministry in all of its forms.

One of our members retired this year after many years as core teacher for the School of the Spirit's *On Being a Spiritual Nurturer* program; and another member completed that two-year program.

We joyfully welcomed three new members to our community this year.

Our meetings for worship are deep and settled, with a vocal ministry that is spirit-led, and with space for prayerful reflection. When First Day School ends and our community's children join us, their young voices provide the community great joy. The number of younger attenders is slowly increasing. Our First Day School curriculum, which was introduced last year, has been successful, although we sometimes struggle to find enough teachers. We continued our practices of baby welcoming, monthly potlucks, teen breakfasts, and secret friends, which have allowed us to deepen our commitments to each other and our larger community.

We have continued to explore and define who we are as a community. We spent extensive time looking inward and deeply examining white privilege and systemic racism. This is an on-going leading for the meeting. We hope that this will help us to be a more inviting meeting and community.

We continue to examine our committee structure and how it fits our needs. We considered whether to make the Earthcare Group a standing committee, but discerned that it should remain an interest group. We formed three ad-hoc groups: Criminal Justice, In-reach Out-reach, and a List Serve Committee.

The Criminal Justice ad hoc committee was formed to write a minute on criminal justice that was approved by Business Meeting and to sent to Massachusetts Governor Charlie Baker to affect upcoming legislation.

The In-reach/Out-reach group was established to examine specific ways to make our meeting more visible and welcoming, and to improve our sense of welcome and accessibility to all meeting members, attenders and new visitors. This group updated the ways we communicate among ourselves, making small changes to make our conversations more welcoming (e.g. announcing our names before we speak). They did mammoth work improving our website to be inviting and sharing of meeting information among ourselves and the wider community of seekers. In-reach/Out-reach continues to discern the many avenues of growth for our community.

An ad hoc committee was formed to transfer our list serve from Yahoo to Google. In the process, this group also created two accounts in Google to manage the overflow of information: one group for meeting announcements and one group for general items of interest.

As a community we desire to participate in actions that make a difference to the world. Through our helping fund we provide support to small organizations where our donation will make a difference. As a community we provided monetary support in responding to the devastation of Hurricane Maria in Puerto Rico. Two members of our meeting are hosting an asylum seeker. Our meeting provided funds for this person's education.

Members participated in a number of marches and actions in the community such as:

January 21 2017 - Boston Women's March

February 19 2017 Rally to Stand Up For Science

April 14 2017 - Good Friday Peace Witness (with Cambridge Friends, at Beacon Hill Friends House)

May 14 2017 - Mother's Day Walk for Peace

June 10 2017 - Boston Pride (Marched with Cambridge Meeting and Cambridge Friends School)

August 19 2017 - Witness against "free speech rally" in Boston

We bring our banner to increase our visibility. We bear witness to our faith in troubled times via demonstrations, donations, phone calls, and living our lives as Friends witnessing our values.

2017 was the second year of our experimental practice of Fresh Pond Circles. Five circles were formed to provide opportunity to come to a more intimate relationship both socially and spiritually with other members of the community and to assist with providing pastoral care to each other. Ministry and Worship laid down the responsibility of formulating these groups. Some of the circles continue to meet.

A number of our members provide support to the Quaker Voluntary Service (QVS). Our community welcomed the group of eight young QVS fellows at our November potluck.

On the climate crisis, members have begun to participate in a voluntary Carbon Tax. Our Earthcare Concerns group has led us all to faithfully examine environmental issues in national and local contexts, and we have given financial support to a number of local conservation organizations.

The Fresh Pond Community is ever grateful to the Cambridge Friends School for providing us the rental space where we can gather, grow, and experience the spiritual bounty of our community.

Moving forward into 2018, we hope to open ourselves more as a meeting. We are establishing ourselves online and developing our website to reach out to visitors, and we are learning about digital ministry. We also will continue to follow the calling to serve in solidarity and support for those whose lives and livelihoods are endangered in our current political climate.

This year we have felt blessed to be engaged in the Community of God and it is our hope that we will continue to be able to tie together the inward and the outward in service of the Spirit. We wait in eager anticipation for how we will be further led.