

**Atlanta Friends Meeting
2015 State of the Meeting Report
Final Draft**

This year has been one of deepening and articulating our sense of spiritual community. In the winter and spring we held two forums on vocal ministry and our experience of worship. This has allowed the meeting to continue to talk about our personal understanding of worship. Our meeting retreat was also on the experience of worship. This year our meeting has deepened and re-affirmed our support for Quaker Voluntary Service. We received three membership requests from long time attenders, had two members transfer their membership to AFM, and held three weddings under the care of the meeting. Our young adults have continued to meet monthly together and our middle school and high school students join us for the first fifteen minutes of worship more regularly. Our worship has continued to flourish and enrich our community. We are grateful for the experience and conversations that have arisen from this year's worship.

Care & Counsel Committee continued to focus on ways to help build and maintain a community that unites all in the Meeting in a shared spiritual life expressed in caring for each other. To let AFM participants know what type of help is available and to encourage Friends to ask for assistance when needed, we published the guidelines for the Assistance Fund for Members and Attenders. In addition, we reached out to newcomers and visitors by having a person meet with them in the library after Meeting for Worship to answer questions. Caring for the Meeting community has also meant assisting individuals with ongoing concerns, remembering Friends in memorial services, continuing our attention to Conscious Aging/Mindful Dying, and sponsoring a celebration of legal marriage equality for same gender couples. Most importantly, we want the community to know that the work of Care & Counsel is love, peace, caring for one another, and lifting one another up.

The Nominating Committee was able to fill nearly 20 committee positions this past year. Most of these were matched with long time members and attenders, as it is sometimes challenging to find younger people who are willing to serve. We will continue to search for and encourage younger friends, as we know this is important to the vitality of the whole meeting and our future. We also asked for and received changes to the handbook job descriptions of Meeting committees and descriptions, which will be updated on the website. This had last been done in 2011. Nominating also sponsored a job fair, so that interested friends could learn more about positions and committees and what they do.

Much needed repairs and renovations to the Meetinghouse began with the repair and restoration of the sprinkler system, new carpeting in the Meeting Room and Library, and new Library furniture. Painting and repair of the library walls and ceiling made for a more comfortable and pleasing space. Major 2016 permanent improvements were prioritized and planned. Workdays were held to maintain the Meeting grounds, including clearing and mulching the vacant lot adjacent to the playground; the Meeting was also surveyed on potential uses for the lot. A new composting system was created, thereby helping to reduce Meeting waste. New parking signs and spaces for physically challenged Friends were installed. The Meeting continued to welcome outside renters, approving new long-term rentals and developing a new rental rate chart. The new personnel liaison joined the Administration committee, a revised custodial task checklist was created for the custodian, additional Sunday childcare was approved, and revisions to the Friend in Residence job description were approved. The creation of a search committee led to the selection of a new Friend in Residence for 2016. Everything that was accomplished in 2015 was made possible by the willing volunteer efforts of so many Meeting members and attenders.

Through the Quakers for Racial Equality group, AFM acts on an ongoing commitment to live our testimony of equality, which compels us to address racism in ourselves, our communities, and in society, especially in the criminal justice system. Quakers for Racial Equality (QRE) engaged the Meeting and Yearly Meeting through workshops, video/discussions, and personal reflections to queries about dismantling racism. At AFM, we've also offered a weekly literature table and a monthly Listening Ear for concerns about racism. We have initiated networking among Friends from Yearly Meeting and Friends General Conference who are working against racism within Friends' institutions and in the nation. QRE and other AFM Friends are involved in our communities addressing racial profiling by police, holding vigils, offering creative conflict resolution workshops, and countering systemic racism in the criminal justice system, housing, and schools. AFM and QRE continue to support a sojourning Friend in her ministry to work for racial justice in the criminal justice system with those most negatively impacted by racial inequity. We appreciate the witness of Friends, both here and physically distant, who challenge us to follow our spiritual leadings to stand up for racial equality.

The Library Committee worked throughout the year to align the library's collection more precisely with items that support specific, current Meetinghouse interests and activities, and to do what was necessary for computerizing the library's catalog and its borrowing procedures. Among other things, the new catalog will allow Meetinghouse attendees to conveniently search the library's holdings from their home computers and allow the Library Clerk to keep more accurate records of which items have been borrowed. Dozens of no-longer-needed library items were sold at several Meetinghouse book sales to raise additional funds to replace missing items or to purchase new materials.

Religious Education is in the 2nd year of our three-year teaching cycle. In preparation for this year's New Testament teaching we continued with our practice of meeting for a retreat in July. There we acknowledged that we come to the New Testament from different experiences. Jesus and the New Testament speak to each of us differently. We all resonate with the ideas of listening for newness in the old stories and with helping children to discern Truth. Our commitment to nurturing children to find the divine within and exploring scripture in order to re-discover the stories led to this year's guiding theme: Nurturing the light within that we may discover the scripture anew. Led by 14 classroom teachers, we continue to use the guidance of the Godly Play curriculum in our teaching. Each grade grouping has four teachers who share the 4 teaching Sundays each month. We depend on volunteers to sign up to assist teachers with door-keeping on each First Day. The nursery (ages 0-2), has 5 to 10 babies on First Day. The lower grades class, (3 years-1st grade) has 8 to 13 children regularly. The middle grades class, (2nd - 4th grade) has 5-8 children; the upper grades class (5th - 7th grade) has 3-6 each week, and the High school group (8th -12th grade) has 10 or more teens most Sundays.

Our community is deepened by the presence of many visitors throughout the year. The Burundi families who have become such an integral part of our meeting continue to help us explore how people with different backgrounds and beliefs can come together in one gathered spiritual home. Atlanta Friends Meeting continues to be a vibrant, supportive community with many opportunities to participate.