

STATES OF SOCIETY

BLOOMINGTON-NORMAL

Our meeting greatly enjoyed the camaraderie of assisting with preparations and local arrangements and participating in the 2002 Friends General Conference Gathering at Illinois State University last July. It was wonderful to be joined by so many Friendly folks in our small city. We particularly appreciated the fellowship with Friends from Heartland Worship Group that grew out of that participation.

Members of our meeting have been very active in peace-making and social justice activities in the community and state including protesting the war in Iraq, advocating for the abolition of the death penalty, and training for draft counseling.

Our meeting moved locations from the local Western Avenue Community Center to the peaceful conference room of the business of one of our members which provides a cozier atmosphere.

Our meeting enjoyed several new attenders and the transfer in membership of the Schobernd family during the year. However, during the past three months attendance at Meetings for Worship has been very small as members and attenders have been drawn away by personal, work, family, peace-making and other activities. Some of our members also still struggle with health problems. We have not been able to sustain First Day School which has created hardship for our Friends with children.

CLEAR CREEK

One of the many challenges of Clear Creek Meeting is to gather its many members from far distances. Clear Creek Meeting covers a broad district in Illinois, from Dixon to Peoria and all points in between. As a result, there are few local members of the meeting.

One of the challenges of having such a broad area is being involved in each other's lives. Clear Creek strives for an intimate involvement with its members. The effort used to meet this challenge strengthens us.

Clear Creek Meeting congregates at the meeting house in McNabb, the location of the Illinois Yearly Meeting. Because of our intimate connection with the meeting house, we have a sense of urgency for the present as well as the future. Clear Creek has the sense of being the repository of the history of IYM through its connection with the meeting house.

Clear Creek has a desire to seed the present so that IYM is nurtured for future generations. By its location, the meeting house in McNabb is surrounded by the quiet and calm of the rural environment. Away from the hustle and bustle of the urban surroundings, members of Clear Creek can find peace and quiet for meditation and solitude for spiritual growth.

Clear Creek is a relatively small meeting. Because of its modest size, the pain of loss is felt by all the members. Some of our members have experienced personal loss and we are doing the work of grieving of these losses.

Clear Creek is few but strong in heart. They remember the past, are in the present and hope for the future.

COLUMBIA

We again used queries addressed by the whole meeting to assess our spiritual state, as organized by Ministry and Counsel. Responses revealed 5 areas of our corporate life.

I. The Sunday meeting for worship is deeply satisfying to many, but not all. Some tell of its leading both to inward transformation and occasionally interpersonal healing. Friends find God's presence in a Living Silence, but also in much of spoken ministry. A strongly gathered sense may indeed be there when not a word is spoken; words may either interrupt or add to what is found in waiting worship. Having the meeting room available for an early hour is appreciated, but we still have trouble ending adult R.E. in time for a settled and orderly beginning of prayerful worship. There are times when Friends experience us as a collection of individuals, with the same message weekly, rather than a body listening for new promptings from the Divine. A Friend has suggested we should be more focused on God than on the world or ourselves. We

sense a desire to encourage more to share their gifts via spoken ministry.

II. Meeting for worship with a concern for business has shown both improvements and also areas yet needing attention. We've been newly encouraged to rise when speaking, which may increase both thoughtfulness and audibility. A much greater number are attending, and our average meeting length has decreased, probably a benefit of greater discipline. The gift of recording has been noted, showing excellent listening skills. A group of younger adults has given significant leadership in the recent life of the meeting, including in our business. They bring vision as well as energy, and we are blessed.

And yet persistent challenges remain: Gospel Order requires constant reminding for staying focused on a topic. We sometimes descend into open discussion, mistaking free speech for waiting upon God's guidance. We sometimes neglect our follow-through, and have difficulty remembering previous deliberations and decisions.

III. Our organizational life, as shown in committee work, is a mixed story. Negatively, we had several committees that simply didn't meet. Some had difficulty attracting or retaining members, leading to questions of whether our size can sustain our present structure. Our generating of this report missed the usual Quarterly Meeting target for accountability. Those charged with nominating often felt they were pushing uphill, with human resources spread too thin.

Positively, though, we witnessed the following: Our Peace and Justice committee had a new infusion of participants. In the face of continuing and threatened war, it gave consistent leadership to the Meeting, which supported its initiatives in the community (public witness, advertising, draft counseling, inter-organizational cooperation, sharing funds). Two ad hoc committees were appointed and brought us results. One group looked at planning for our physical facilities, and started some longer-term recommendations. The other examined possible "seeds of war" in our energy use as Americans, and concretely organized carpooling as well as a fresh look at our use of property.

We are still seeing if we can consistently maintain our housekeeping with volunteer effort; the responsibilities are not well-enough assumed throughout the Meeting.

Financially, we are fortunate in having regular contributors, and the base is growing somewhat. We've been able not only to meet our budget, but also respond to some new situations arising.

In our communication, we have effectively been using e-mail, with clear policies, although phone-tree usage is still desired by some. We've added a regular web-site (<http://quakers.missouri.org>) hosted for free, which has helped others to find us. Our newsletter has achieved a predictable publication schedule, and is helpful to both regular and less-frequent attenders. We're indebted to the 4 workers who make this possible.

IV. In our life as a community of Friends, we report great caring extended to families dealing with elders, health crises, and changes in circumstances. Parties, cards, visits, and mementos usually mark these passages and are welcomed. In retrospect, we all learned much by the presence for several years of a Friend in a wheelchair, benefiting from her gifts and humor, and becoming sensitized in new ways. Families with children are relatively rare among us, and we suffer from this distortion. It is difficult to put the energy into planning a First-Day School program when so few children are ever present. And yet we know this does not create a welcoming environment for families with children.

Adult religious education has a constant core of participants and presenters, but does not meet the needs of all. We've often tried to use it to introduce Quakerism, but the time never seems sufficient.

Friends have a social life together: This has included an annual spring picnic breakfast, an eagle watch, and an Ozark float trip with Friends from other meetings. We have enjoyed a monthly Fun Night with activities that often are multigenerational. For some, this embodies our community at its strongest. Others would question, though, whether we ever can get beyond "chumminess" to experience a transformative spiritual community.

We continue to support several of our youth who conscientiously object to war and conscription, and who are also acting constructively on their peace witness.

Those who represent us to, and participate in, the larger bodies and projects of Friends find it satisfying. Columbia Friends who take seriously our quarterly and yearly meeting responsibilities wish more Friends from the Meeting were involved. Several Friends have participated in national and international Quaker gatherings, and are eager to share their experiences.

Overt conflicts among us, or contentious issues, have not been apparent recently. However, we find it bewildering when some, experiencing alienation, simply withdraw without giving us opportunity either to learn or to improve.

V. In the larger community, we continue to assess the balance between witness for social justice by individuals, and giving a corporate witness as a Meeting. Quakers have wide influence here within the anti-war and alternatives to violence movements, and continue to give leadership against the death penalty. Tragically, the nation's rush to war creates greater openness to bearing our historic peace testimony, as typified by FCNL yard signs seen around town, made available for free to all. Quaker presence continues to be disproportionately large in the Interfaith Council and Interfaith Peace Alliance.

We continue to seek and find ways to address issues in the community around us, and give expression to our social witness: We remain participants in attempts to alleviate hunger locally and globally; Earth Day was occasion for distributing much material about conscientious objection, and raising Friends' visibility; Our heightened profile includes regular newspaper, phone book, and Internet presence.

But we still find a hunger to discover how we can unify as a Meeting behind tangible programs implementing our testimonies, making us a City on a Hill. Becoming deeper and more faithful as a worshipping community is suggested as a key to that outreach. If we allow God to create a beacon of Light through us, that will make us more than an internal fellowship.

DECATUR

The three families of Decatur Friends have been able to carry on as in recent years, meeting in the basement conference room of the Dove agency, or in homes. When we need to change plans, a few phone calls or emails suffice.

In the fall of 2002, Cindy Reynolds brought to Monthly Meeting a concern that we seek means to oppose preemptive military action against Iraq. From her many contacts in the Decatur community, a group of about a dozen people began meeting every two or three weeks. Results have been a quarter-page ad in the local newspaper; a mailing to all the religious congregations in the area; participation in public demonstrations in Decatur and in Springfield; and a series of Wednesday noon prayer vigils. These have been held in turn in three Catholic and five Protestant churches. In collaboration with a Millikin University student group, we sponsored a lecture by a history professor from the University of Illinois at Springfield on "Getting Iraq Right - A Most Difficult Decision".

We do not know the outcome of our efforts; nevertheless, it has been encouraging to become better acquainted with these men and women of varied faith traditions in Decatur who promote peacemaking, not war-making, by all appropriate means.

DOWNERS GROVE

This year was an active and vital one for our meeting, with challenges, joys, and sorrows. We currently enjoy a resident membership of 54. We were pleased this year to welcome Ruth Marquez, Karl and Evelyn Zerfoss, and Lillie Mae Schadle as new members.

Following the September 11, 2001 attacks, our First Day School embarked on a study of Islam, involving a good amount of reading and discussion. The program of study culminated in a visit to the Islamic Foundation in Lombard, where we enjoyed a tour of the mosque and a lively discussion about both Islam and Quakerism. The members of our group and our hosts both were surprised and pleased to learn about the strong commonalities between the two faiths, including the belief that God is present in each person.

We also recently enjoyed our annual First Day School family canoe trip on the Fox River.

We were blessed to celebrate the marriage of Andrea Wolfe and Tim Bretl at the meetinghouse, on a beautiful, warm Saturday afternoon in September. The meeting for worship was lively and full of love, and followed by a gathering under a tent on the meetinghouse grounds with much good food and good fellowship. Our Young Friends Music Ensemble provided lovely music before and after the meeting for worship.

We mourn the recent death of our good friend Jim Sprinkle, who passed away after a heroic struggle with leukemia. Many of us attended the memorial service for Jim at the Lombard Mennonite Church, a congregation with which, along with our meeting, the Sprinkles have long shared their joyful presence. Our thoughts and prayers are with Donna, Heather, and Samantha Sprinkle, and their extended family, as they cope with Jim's untimely death and move forward with their lives.

Last fall we determined to intentionally explore the spirituality of our meeting. With gracious assistance from FGC and Marty Grundy and Deborah Fisch of the FGC Traveling Ministries Program, we met for a retreat during which we discussed issues of spirituality, and explored how to recognize and rediscover the inherent strengths of our meeting, and how to create new opportunities for us to grow spiritually together. Marty Grundy and Deb Fisch joined us to facilitate the retreat, and in Marty's following report to us she noted the widespread acknowledgement that we would enjoy simply being able to spend more time together. In the months following the retreat, a number of us met in small worship sharing groups, in that spirit.

Earlier this year we hosted representatives from the AFSC for a discussion of the continuing impact of sanctions on the Iraqi people. We approved a minute in support of the Campaign of Conscience for the Iraqi People, which is co-sponsored by AFSC, Pax Christi, Fellowship of Reconciliation and other organizations. The Campaign of Conscience seeks to provide humanitarian aid to Iraq, focused particularly on water purification. We are deeply concerned about the prospect of our government starting a war with Iraq, and a number of us have been engaged in efforts to avoid that war.

We also approved a minute of support for Evanston Meeting as it works on issues related to same sex marriage. The minute stated that we could not unite with Western Yearly Meeting's Executive Committee Report which determined that Evanston Meeting be laid down as a WYM member meeting.

Our New Meetinghouse committee continued this year to proceed deliberately to explore plans for a new building. The committee has met with an architect to discuss our needs and priorities and to sketch out preliminary plans, which we hope to discuss at a called meeting for business in the relatively near future. We foresee many challenges and opportunities as we continue with this process.

DUNELAND

Duneland Friends Meeting has continued in 2002 to nurture the Spirit and let our outward work arise from the leading of the Spirit. We experience weeks of silent worship and occasionally Meetings with spoken ministry. We struggle to abandon our worries to find God's messages, when the concerns of the outer world are so pressing and sometimes discouraging. We pray that the peace we find in meeting for worship can be transformed into a witness to the world.

We have only had Meeting for Worship with a concern for Business every other month. Monthly Bible study has been increased in frequency with two sessions every month. We have found the Larry and JoAnn Spears' "Friendly Bible Study" to be a meaningful way to share our beliefs and vision, and experience of God and the wisdom of Jesus' teachings.

During this last year we have become the worship home for new attenders including Marjory Crawford, Pat Lucas, Sandy Huntley and Priscila and Fernando Freire. This has been a joy because we have not been actively seeking new attenders, and yet God provides! Noel Pavlovic became a member of the Meeting in November.

This fall the Spirit has led us to a number of activities. In October we hosted a public program with Pat and Kathy Floerke from the Center for Development in Central America based

in Nicaragua. They shared the community service work they do for displaced people. In November, long time F(friends were invited to a special potluck to get reacquainted. In December we met with the local "Meditation Circle" (Buddhist) to assemble hygiene kits for Iraq to be distributed through AFSC. Potluck gave us time to get acquainted and be introduced to each other's spiritual practices.

The Meeting, and Sandy Bowles in particular, have continued to care for Sylvia Way, who moved to Fountainview in Portage. Sylvia celebrated her 87th birthday in November.

Benjamin White graduated from Scattergood Friends School in May and started at Guilford College in the fall. Janna White commenced her senior year at Scattergood. Nathan and Emily Pavlovic join us fairly regularly in Meeting for Worship.

Members continue to serve in various ways in our community, at the Yearly Meeting and wider Quaker organizations. We have among our number the clerk of IYM Ministry and Advancement Committee, IYM Field Secretary, Treasurer of the Friends Committee on Unity with Nature (FCUN), Clerk of the FCUN Sustainability Committee, Friends who serve as a Quaker voice on the Religious Communities Task Force of Valparaiso, Indiana, and one who expresses her concern about war through art and writing.

EVANSTON

On September 8, 2002, Members and Attenders of Evanston Meeting of Friends (EMF) gathered to share thoughts and reflections about the life of the Meeting. Friends agreed that Evanston Meeting has significant strengths: 1) The Meeting offers prayerful and practical support to Members and Attenders; 2) Plentiful social and worship-related opportunities provide multiple opportunities for meaningful interpersonal connection; and 3) Friendship dinners continue to create fellowship and welcome newcomers. The Peace and Social Concerns Committee has created a clear and powerful revised mission statement and continues to support many individual and corporate leadings, from peace activism to the Friends of Latin America scholarship program to Right Sharing of World Resources fundraisers. During this time of geopolitical unrest, the Meeting is trying to reach out more effectively to the broader community. In November, the Meeting for Business approved a minute, drafted by Peace and Social Concerns, opposing war on Iraq. A Communications Committee has formed to facilitate stronger connections between EMF and the larger community and to improve communication between committees and among Members/Attenders. Although it is impossible to list all our activities of the past year, highlights include an expanded commitment, supported by a budget line, for Friends General Conference; planning for the debut of Pendle Hill Midwest, bringing workshops from Pendle Hill to Friends across our region, beginning in January 2003; and the development of plans for significant improvements to the Meetinghouse.

In response to the request of a same gender couple in our Meeting, EMF experienced a sense that Spirit was calling the Meeting to take their marriage under its care. With a listening sensitivity to members who did not share in this sense, the Meeting moved forward and performed the marriage, which occasioned a great celebration and sense of community.

EMF was challenged this past year as a result of its conflict with Western Yearly Meeting over the issue of authority. After lengthy, thoughtful attempts to work through the conflict, Western Yearly Meeting decided to "release" EMF as a Meeting of WYM. While Members and Attenders have struggled to maintain a listening spirit during this process, Friends agreed that the Meeting has grown through the experience. EMF continues to seek ways to tend and support the 3-4 Members who, having actively participated in WYM over the years, regret EMF's changed relationship with WYM. Though we are no longer part of WYM, we remain committed to maintaining a loving, cooperative relationship with WYM.

The number of young attenders and members at our Meeting has grown to approximately 32. The Meeting has responded to this growth by offering 3 First Day classes: preschoolers, K-3; and late elementary/middle schoolers.

The Religious Education Committee and the meeting as a whole are working to bridge the gap between "upstairs" and "downstairs." We have recruited talented First Day School teach-

ers, and family nights at the meetinghouse have been highly successful. Religious Education seeks creative ways to maintain a sense of connection between the Meeting and our high schoolers. We are experimenting with providing employment opportunities within the Meeting for these Friends.

During our reflective time together, we generated the following queries to aid us in moving toward further growth and development:

- *Do our committees work in productive relationship with Business Meeting?
- *How can we nurture the spirit of divine guidance in Meeting for Business and Meeting for Worship?
- *How do/can we respond when Members or Attenders stop coming to Meeting?
- *Should the Meeting commit to making personal contact with newcomers? How could this happen?
- *How can we effectively support individual and corporate leadings to activism?
- *How could we better focus and coordinate our peace-making efforts? (Perhaps we need to shift from seeing ourselves as an organization with activities to envisioning ourselves as part of a movement that strategizes.)
- *Is there a way of developing and conveying more of a unified voice as a Meeting?
- *How can we access the wider world of Quaker tradition and history that help clarify the differences and similarities between “unity,” “consensus,” and “sense of the Meeting”?

In sum, the quality of our worship together seems rich, and we address issues concerning Meeting for Worship as they arise. The meeting remains committed to preserving the “safety” of Meeting for Worship, ensuring that there is no criticism of messages during Meeting. The Meeting experienced a brief period in which an unusual number of messages were being given with an unusually brief period of time between messages; this was followed by more gathered Meetings. The Meeting plans to explore the nature of messages and vocal ministry in a worship-sharing format. Meeting for Worship provides spiritual nourishment in abundance to Members and Attenders, and our sense of community is strong.

-Jean Petrolle, for Ministry and Counsel, Evanston Meeting of Friends

HEARTLAND

The Heartland Worship Group meets in homes of its five attenders. Our worship tends to focus on spiritual and personal growth and enrichment, although attenders have been involved with social concerns, particularly the war in Iraq. We meet Sunday mornings at 11:00 a.m., followed by fellowship.

Roy and Carolyn Treadway became grandparents in July, when Oliver Ross Stratton Treadway was born to Nathan and Caroline.

- Roy C. Treadway, Co-Convenor

LAKE FOREST

This past year has been an abundant one for Lake Forest Friends Meeting—abundant with love and concern for our neighbors including those in other parts of the globe suffering from war, disease, hunger; those in our own county who are homeless; and the person sitting next to us whose hand we shake at the close of meeting.

In October, 2002, at our 50th anniversary Jubilee celebration, we admired the courage of the Vietnam War protestors photographed in Market Square during the early 1970's. Little did we know that the following month, our meeting would once again be making signs and heading to Market Square for a peace vigil, protesting the planned war against Iraq. Lake Forest Meeting has been called to act on our peace testimony. All ages from toddlers to those in their eighties have been taking part. Besides the Market Square vigils, many have joined the every other Saturday vigils along Green Bay Road, rallies in Chicago, and other protests. Kerry Hall has been an inspirational guide; organizing the Market Square vigils, and keeping us informed on the political situation.

Our meeting for worship has been growing, mainly since people have been coming more regularly. More visitors are joining us as well; some have mentioned the Iraqi crisis drew them to seek out Quakers. We generally have 40 - 50 adults attending, plus 20 or more children in the First Day School. Anne Galloway transferred her membership to Burlington Meeting, Vermont. We gained two new members: Irene Freutel Sewell and Cynthia Freutel Nadig. We were blessed with two lovely marriages under the care of the meeting: Bill Dawson, Jr. and Lori Parnes Dawson in September, and Tim Sewell and Irene Freutel Sewell in February. Samuel Dawson was born in October to Paul and Kathleen. We held a memorial service for Janice Domanik's mother, Dorothy Young, at the beginning of this year.

Lake Forest Meeting has had an abundance of meetings and forums this past year. A Mid-week meeting, started in October, is thriving. Friends gather Thursday mornings for a half hour meeting for worship followed by a light breakfast. Forums were wide-ranging: Quakers and Money, Rufus Jones' life and writings, AFSC's Afro-Colombian tour, the organization Play for Peace, challenges facing the Friends Committee on National Legislation, strategic plans of the American Friends Service Committee, Quaker perspectives on mental health, and a talk by Moshe Ram, Israeli Consul General of the Midwest.

In addition, we have two discussion groups: a pre-meeting one on Sunday morning, and Wednesday evening "Silent Worship/Quaker Values" classes. The pre-meeting group discussed a series of "On Vocal Ministry" essays from North Carolina Meeting, and is reading *Listening Spirituality, volume II: Corporate Spiritual Practice Among Friends* by Patricia Loring. This book has inspired discussions on the nature of community, vocal ministry, a gathered meeting, the role of elders, business meeting, and discernment.

The First Day School children join the meeting for worship for the last ten minutes or so. At the close of meeting, each class gives a report to the meeting. This practice continues to unite the children and adults, plus give the children a chance to articulate what they have learned. The youngest group frequently shares an art project. The middle group has been memorizing prayers and psalms, plus studying Bible stories and Quaker values. The High School class has learned about building consensus, "Faith and Practice", and queries. The Meeting can take pride in the active First Day School, reflecting the dedication and hard work of the Religious Education Committee.

The highlight of the year was our 50th anniversary celebration held over Columbus Day weekend. The Jubilee, Hospitality, Building and Grounds, and Archives Committees worked hard for this gala event! Guests from other meetings, near and far, came, as well as our out of town members Linda Lyman and Emma Burton Cadbury. "Lake Forest Friends Meeting celebrated its 50th anniversary with joyous enthusiasm on the weekend of October 12 and 13, 2002. We remembered our elders with pictures displayed on the wall and in photo albums. We read old letters and old guest books. We shared our memories of the Meeting. We visited the log cabin where the first Meetings took place and walked in the prairie around it. We understood how the spirits of our elders are still very much a part of our meeting and continue to inform us. We celebrated our lives today with games, singing, performances, and lots of delicious food. We felt unity with the Spirit, the past warming our hearts as we face the future together." (Jubilee Committee Report, "Lake Forest Friends Meeting Newsletter", November, 2002)

Another intergenerational event was the annual Christmas Tree outing to the Howenstine farm in McHenry. The Christmas pageant was especially well done this year. It helps to have an actress, Betsey Means Wills, plan and direct it.

The architect of our meeting house, Lewis Walton, would be pleased with the work done this past year. Ceiling fans now cool us in the hot weather. Moreover, in true Quaker spirit, they are quiet! Building and Grounds had many workdays in the fall and Stephen Domanik donated his time to paint the interior of the meeting house. We also have a new roof.

Sallyann Garner has worked tirelessly, writing short biographies of meeting members. These are included in our monthly newsletter and have helped us to know and understand each other better. Her labor of love has built a stronger sense of community to our meeting over many years.

The Committee of Care informs the meeting when someone in our community needs assistance, whether it be meals brought, rides given, and/or concern shown through cards and phone calls.

Our work with PADS continues; the third Monday of the month, we cook and serve a meal for forty to fifty guests at St. James Greater Church of God and Christ in North Chicago. The PADS committee works hard to coordinate the volunteers. Sometimes, the children help with cooking and/or serving—a wonderful opportunity for them and the adults to put faith into practice!

In our Meetings for Business, we have discovered that achieving a sense of the meeting can be difficult, and sometimes impossible. After months and months of discussion as to how to help victims in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, we could not agree on how to fairly donate money. Finally, a new way opened; we are reaching out to Israeli, Jewish and Palestinian/Arab leaders in the Chicago area by sending small delegations from our meeting. Chuck Hutchcraft and Maurine Pyle met with the Consul General and Deputy Consul General of Israel. Elizabeth Mertic is in the process of contacting Palestinian leaders in hopes to set up a meeting time. Our emphasis is on listening to these leaders in a non-threatening, non-judgmental manner.

The Peace and Social Concerns Committee is also working on letting young adults both in the meeting and the wider community know that we are a resource for information on alternatives to joining the military if a draft is reinstated. Several members of our meeting have attended a training workshop in conscientious objector counseling.

In an effort to streamline the Meeting for Business, each committee no longer reports at every business meeting. The committee convener notifies the clerk ahead of time if the committee should be on the agenda. This procedure has simplified the business meeting, and saved a lot of time.

The Meeting passed a minute encouraging everyone in Lake Forest Friends Meeting to pray every day at noon for our world leaders to seek a nonviolent solution to the Iraq crisis. Besides, hopefully, helping the world situation, this practice has strengthened the meeting as we pray together each noon, even though we are not physically gathered.

Many of our members are active leaders in Illinois Yearly Meeting and other Quaker organizations. Maurine Pyle is Assistant Clerk of Illinois Yearly Meeting. Cathy Garra is Clerk of IYM's Finance Committee. Chuck Hutchcraft is the Chicago Area Coordinator of the AFSC. The Clerk of the Americas Section of Friends World Committee for Consultation is Elizabeth Mertic. We are enriched and informed by the reports of all those who serve in the wider Quaker fellowship.

The Meeting for Worship is the core of our faith community. We constantly strive for a gathered meeting in which the messages come from the depths of our being and spring from a living silence. Some meetings for worship come much closer to a gathered meeting than others. Sometimes, it is difficult to hear the message, so Friends are urged to speak loud and clear.

We feel renewed after the meeting for worship, ready to face the challenges in the week ahead. The threatening world situation has made the Meeting more focused and energetic. When the winds of war have died down (which, we trust, they eventually will), let us retain our enthusiasm and commitment.

- Jane Rockey

MILWAUKEE

Where is Meeting spiritually?

To respond to this query we look at Meetings for Worship and Business, the tone and responsiveness of the community life, and the quality of our individual spiritual lives. Sometimes worship is deep with centered vocal ministry. But not all messages shared have enhanced the stillness. Some have been deliberately challenging. We are having trouble conveying the sacredness of Quaker worship to some who attend our meeting. We all need to remember when we speak that we are interrupting the prayer and meditation of others, so the message should be short, direct, and Spirit led. We also need to be accepting of differences in theologi-

cal framework. Newcomers often have a learning curve, which we accept. We need to do more education about vocal ministry.

In Meeting for Business, the Clerk has regrouped our many activity reports and action items, with readings for each grouping. This enhances our sense of worship while conducting business. With the building process finished, the kinds of decisions we make are less urgent and long-term, so attendance has fallen off a little. We note Friends can be passionate about small items as well as big projects.

The responsiveness of people in the Meeting community to one another is strong. Those who are unemployed or experiencing significant illness have received support. The sharing of requests to “hold in the light” is from the heart, and involves all ages. There are many circles of friendship evident. We hope to draw our newer attenders into the many aspects of Meeting life. We miss those who have moved (Bob & Barbara Greenler to Madison, Amy Crofts to Black River Falls, Alissa & David Rowan to St Louis MO and Julie Nelson & Brady Christoph to Portland OR), and those who have left.

In our individual spiritual journeys, we are challenged to live in the present moment, to let go the judging voice in the head that labels others and self, and to find silence during the day to connect with spirit. It helps when we express gratitude, laugh a lot, connect with nature, art and music, and make opportunities to meet in small groups and get to know each other’s journey.

What have been Milwaukee Meeting’s major accomplishments during 2002?

- Coming to clearness about what kind of new community use we wanted in the renovated building took many months and several committees. That work begins to bear fruit. Life-ways Child Care is finishing up its first year in the lower level. The fledgling Peace Learning Center held its first programming with children from Gaenslen School.
 - The International Gift Shop was amazing, yielding over \$8000 for AFSC. It is still the Meeting event with the broadest base of involvement.
 - Welcoming many new families. People are staying. Fifteen families with babies and young toddlers each received a small quilt which everyone signed.
 - An outstanding Adult Religious Education program and Wednesday evening Invitation to Stillness, which is a community outreach activity.
 - Religious education for the children is core. The dedicated coordinators and core teachers have done a marvelous job though they are eager for able and willing adults to share in teaching. The curriculum has centered on important stories.
 - There have been transitions in leadership – a new Presiding Clerk, new clerk of Ministry and Counsel, new International Gift Shop coordinators. Also, new concerns have gathered supporters – a Committee on Conscientious Objection / Military Counseling has formed, and a Committee on Accessibility, called That All May Worship. Peace & Social Concerns has been reconstituted.
 - Communications committee helped us reach clearness on release of directory information.
 - Just keeping all the “old” pieces going with what often feels like a skeleton crew– Hospitality, Meetinghouse, Quaker Grants, Land, Finance, MICAHA, Library, Communications, Ministry & Counsel, Religious Education, Prison Visitation.
- What major challenges lie ahead?
- Integrating newcomers. A new subcommittee has formed, to try new approaches, enriched by the sharing at the Sep02 FGC workshop on Nurturing the Meeting Community. We want to create a climate of trust so people can reveal themselves. We also want to make space in our structures and lives for new people to join us.
 - Getting people to feel responsible for spiritual health of Meeting and Meeting community life
 - Expanding involvement in MICAHA (Milwaukee Innercity Congregations Allied for Hope)
 - Communicating in a large Meeting community
 - Helping our unemployed members and attenders
 - Supporting resistance to war in Iraq
 - Becoming more racially diverse
 - Dealing with conflicts and tensions

- Supporting spiritual journeys of such a diverse group
- Exploring in greater depth what it means to be a Quaker
- Continuing support of west side worship group and Racine-Kenosha worship group

Attendance: Sun. mornings: Adults: 90; Young people: 25; Mtg. for Business: 26

New Members: Requests: Nathan Falck; Transfers: Charles Rathman (from Oshkosh), George Owen (from Santa Fe)

Marriages: Barbara Coyle and Jill LeStarge

Births & Adoptions: Maya Simone Freedman (3/27/01), Indigo Dawn Lubotsky (4/26/02), David Newell (2/10/03)

Deaths: Benjamin Newell @ 6 yrs. (11/2/02)

NORTHSIDE

We at Northside Friends Meeting (NFM) feel ourselves to be at a crossroads, acknowledging our history of following and supporting individual leadings but being led into greater sensitivity to corporate discernment and faithfulness. Beginning with work by our House and Space committee, NFM has been led this year to ask deep questions about its identity. Following small group meetings, NFM members were asked at a fall retreat to create a vision of who we want to be and what we need to fulfill that vision. Concurrently, the Education and Development committee embarked on its own vision sessions for creating a vital First Day program. Their exploration resulted in a recommendation to lay down First Day School until such a time as more people feel called and ready to do this important work. Likewise, Nominating Committee and Ministry and Counsel, meeting together to address disunity between them, came to wonder why it was difficult to fill the Meeting's committees and why those serving often felt frustrated and drained rather than feeling spiritually nourished by their service. Our process of opening up to one another brought us to the awareness that the very fabric of our community has become fragile and needs careful attention.

Nominating Committee and Ministry and Counsel came to unity on our need for deep listening. These committees jointly brought a minute to the October Meeting for Business recommending laying down normal business in order to establish a Jubilee Year to discern who the meeting is as a religious community. This minute was held over for further discernment. In January the following minute was passed: **With a view toward coordinating the work of the Meeting until September 2004, (Northside) Friends will direct Northside to: lay down all (non-essential) committees and offices...; Nominating Committee bring to the February meeting for business the job descriptions (for two committees-Spiritual Ministry and Community Care); bring to the March Meeting for business nominations for service on two standing committees (Spiritual Ministry and Community Care); and these two committees will coordinate the work of the Meeting until September 2004.** As this report is being written, we continue to labor with how we want to conduct this time of reflection and rededication. The way forward has not yet become clear to us. The State of Society Committee developed the following queries in an attempt to discern where we are at this time in the process.

Queries:

What attracted you and keeps you coming back to NFM?

How would you assess the spiritual vitality of NFM?

How would you assess the quality of community life here?

Friends come to Northside to worship, to learn, and to hear God. While the lack of permanent space was seen as a value by some and a lack by others, the themes that emerged in the worship-sharing on the state of society attest to what we see as being a uniquely Quaker faith community: the lack of answers, the absence of preaching, the lack of structure and dogma, the members' diversity, the witness and support for each others' spiritual growth, intimacy, and imperfection. While recognizing our limitations—the lack of elders and a related lack of ability to foster elders, our difficulties in putting our belief in community into practice except in times of individual crises or needs for assistance in discernment, and the uneven quality of vocal ministry—there remains a strong hope that we may grow into our potential.

Queries:

Do you see service to the community as an important part of your spiritual development?

Are political and/or social beliefs central to your spiritual life?

Is political activism central to your spiritual life?

Many present felt that we put the cart before the horse in how we phrased this question. Spiritual life is the core from which we act and is essential to inform what we do. The Quaker testimonies provide a basis for a system of ethics that is relevant to social and political beliefs and action in the world. Some at NFM desire greater corporate witness in the world. Others feel that service to family and friends is the higher value and has priority over societal duties. There did seem to be agreement that NFM, as a community, has a responsibility to support those who act for us. It also seems important to achieve some visibility to let people know that we, Quakers, are here.

Queries:

How does your committee service feed you spiritually?

Is this committee effective?

Besides the worship-sharing, individuals serving on committees over the past year were asked to respond to these written queries. Five individuals did so. They made a clear distinction between support committees and standing committees: service on the support committees was discerned to be quite nourishing while service on the standing committees of Meeting was not. Another distinction was made between the work of the committee, which could be quite enriching, and the committee function and dynamics of interaction.

In the midst of these concerns and questions, there have been many riches at NFM this year. We welcomed 11 new members (see SOS 2002) at a summer picnic at the lake. The men's group has met twice monthly throughout the year and a women's group has met a few times without settling into a regular pattern.

In addition to continuing Mid-week Meeting for Worship, the 4th week of which is Meeting for Healing, we approved the start-up of a worship group at North Park University under the guidance of Charley Earp. Under the leadership of Pat Monaghan and Daniel Hall, Friends gather almost every six weeks for a Meeting for Friends in Nature at the Chicago Botanical Garden.

We heard from many Friendly visitors: Natalia Cordona shared her experiences with AFSC's Latin American program; Deanna Boyd shared her experiences as part of a Christian Peacemaker Team delegation to Palestine; Mary Kay Rehard and Patrick Nugent presented on their leading to work as the co-principals of Friends Theological College in Kaimosi, as well as their experiences at the FUM Triennial in Nairobi; Fran Henderson of Bethel AME Church and Jeanette Baker of Evanston Friends Meeting joined Sophie de la Mar, Brayton Gray, and Luis Vera to share the joys and challenges received from their respective prison ministries; NFM hosted the Friendly Folk Dancer annual meeting and dance.

Anna Poplawska and Michael Lawrence led an ongoing discussion group on whether Friends actually welcome diversity, especially in political views. Brayton Gray presented his photos, stories, and a videotape from his experience as a Christian Peacemaker Team delegate to the Mideast to NFM, to Evanston Friends Meeting, to Lake Forest Meeting, to Oak Park Monthly Meeting, and to the Lions Club of Waterford, Wisconsin, and continues to explore opportunities to tell his experience of witnessing for peace and standing in the way of violence.

"Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good." I Corinthians 12, 4-7.

Service in the Wider Quaker Community

FGC Gathering: Sophie de la Mar, workshop committee; Brayton Gray, worship committee; Dale Hayes, evening program committee; Terry Miller, movies; Anna Poplawska, interest group leader (Dream Interpretation) and Yoga instructor.

IYM: Committee on Faith and Practice, Colleen Reardon; Finance Committee, Robert Foulkes; Maintenance and Planning Committee, co-clerk, Robin Johnson, Marie White; Ministry and Advancement, Faith Romano, Tom Stabnicki; Naming Committee, Judy Jager; Nominating Committee, Marti Matthews; Oversight Committee for Administrative Coordinator, Judy Jager; Peace Resources Committee, clerk, Elizabeth Sprague; Religious Education Committee, Michaelle Cooke; Quaker Volunteer Service, Training and Witness Committee, co-clerk, Marti Matthews and Judy Jager; Youth Oversight Committee, co-clerk, Mark Robinson and Michaelle Cooke; Electronic Communications, co-clerk, Brayton Gray and Pam Melick; Development Committee, Tom Stabnicki; IYM Women's Weekend, co-clerks, Michaelle Cooke and Charlotte Wood-Harrington; IYM Men's Retreat, co-clerk, Brayton Gray, workshop leader, Jim Depies. In addition, Marie White performed a grant writing function in an attempt to get funding for our historic meetinghouse.

Friends Association for Higher Education: Pat Monaghan.

Friends Committee on National Legislation: Tom Dix

FLGC: Colleen Reardon and Doug Tipton

Friendly Folk Dancers: Sophie de la Mar, assistant. clerk and handbook coordinator.

Social Witness:

Pro-peace, anti-war: deserving of special mention are: Brayton Gray's travel to the Mideast from July 25 through August 6 as a member of a Christian Peacemaker Team delegation to witness for peace and stand in the way of violence; Elizabeth Sprague's work with the Horizons Community Services Anti-Violence Project which includes writing the protocols to be used statewide by agencies working in the field of domestic violence; she also was instrumental in organizing the workshop on conscientious objector counselors' training; and Pam Melick's call to be a peacemaker in preparation for which she is attending the three Pendle Hill Midwest weekend workshops on peacemaking.

Anti-racism: Pam Melick

Anti-Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation (formerly School of the Americas): Paz St. John and Ben Graham.

Anti-death penalty: Robin Johnson, Paz St. John, Sophie de la Mar.

Prison ministry: Sophie de la Mar, Brayton Gray, Anna Poplawska, Luis Vera.

Literacy training/tutoring: Joe Grissom.

Food pantry (The Common Pantry): Ray Wang

Care for the Earth: Bruce Kanarek, service trip leader for the Sierra Club (Grand Canyon), Robert Foulkes and Robin Johnson, planting trees in Ireland

Pilgrimages:

Pendle Hill: "Gospel Order" weekend workshop, Bruce Kanarek

Young Quakers: "Circle of Love" weekend gathering, Alethea Tschetterwood.

Mennohaven Retreat: "Leadership, Responding to Leadings", Charlotte Wood-Harrington, Doug Tipton, Elizabeth Sprague, Brayton Gray, Sophie de la Mar, Daniel Hall, Bruce Kanarek, Marti Matthews, Tom Dix, Kim Kurrus.

Archival Data:

Average attendance First Day Meeting for Worship: 35-40

Average attendance Meeting for Business: 20-25

New Life:

Cecil Romano was born to Emil and Faith Romano 7th month, 24th day, 2002. He was welcomed into the Northside community 9th month, 15th day, 2002.

Stella Rachel Narkiewicz was born to Tim and Elke Narkiewicz 8th month, 25th day, 2002.

Liam Cu'ong Brubaker was born 5th month, 25th day, 2002, in Vietnam, and adopted by Kevin and Debbie Brubaker 1st month, 9th day, 2003 after Kevin and Debbie made two trips to Vietnam to arrange the adoption.

Weddings: Jess Cohen and Michael Palmer 6th month, 8th day, 2002, at Evanston Friends Meeting under the care of NFM.

Memberships:

Transfers: Sandy Huntley from NFM to Duneland MM.

Pat Lucas from NFM to Duneland MM.

Cathy Smith from NFM to Vancouver MM.

Sojourning: Malcolm Pacey from Westminster Friends at Hop Gardens, London.

Moves:

Beth Burbank, Bill Esler, and Kyran Esler to Port Orchard, WA.

Amy Hostler to Olean, NY.

Jen Chapin-Harris to Silver Spring, MD where she is now employed by FCNL.

Other news:

Marti Matthews published an article "What is Worship?" in the December *Friends Journal*.

Pat Monaghan published *The Red-Haired Girl from the Bog* after seven years of writing and research.

Anna Poplowska published 2 articles in *Quaker Life*: "Teaching Ethics" and "Books as a Form of Community-Building"; Anna exhibited her drawings at FGC Gathering and at the Harrison St. Art Co-op in Oak Park.

Joe Grissom's photography was exhibited in The Know Show and in a solo show at A Taste of Heaven.

OAK PARK

Oak Park Meeting of Friends has experienced a year of growth, both spiritually and in numbers of attenders.

A highlight of the year was the hosting of the Metropolitan Chicago General Meeting that brought together Friends to celebrate peace through song and dance. Other community outreach beyond the meeting house walls included several community events sponsored by the Oak Park Coalition for Truth and Justice. Many members and attenders contributed time and energy to the peace rallies and marches that continue to teach us lessons about resistance to war.

Our education programs have flourished, both for adults and with the First Day School. The adults have focused on several educational opportunities both after the meeting for worship and worship sharing in Friends' homes. The shared reading of John Punshon's *Encounter with Silence* was recently completed. A workshop provided by Roxy Jacobs on vocal ministry encouraged members and attenders to better discern the source of our own spoken ministry. Questions such as "When do I hear the Divine voice?" and "What turns the waiting worshipper into a minister?" continue to help us grow together in the Spirit. Reading passages from George Fox's *Journal* and the history of the Quaker peace testimony has strengthened attenders' understanding of Quaker history.

The First Day School utilized *Walking Cheerfully* and *Growing in the Light*, two curricula that recognize and nurture the light within each of us for student attenders ranging in age from 4 years to 12 years. Students presented a skit after worship to demonstrate the lessons of George Fox's imprisonment and resistance to war. In addition music and crafts are incorporated into the curriculum to teach Quaker values to our youth. Helen Dickinson also plays flute music informally before meeting for worship for early arrivers.

Our work with other churches, mosques, and synagogues in our community has strengthened our community spirit. We continue to serve dinners at the Public Action to Deliver Shelter (PADS) on the fifth Friday of the month. The Christmas adopt-a-family program generated much discussion about the values symbolized by gift giving. The group resolved a conflict concerning gift choices and the gift-wrapping was enjoyed by the First Day School attenders. Continued letter-writing to Governor Ryan concerning the death penalty contributed to the commutation of all death sentences imposed under the Illinois capital punishment system. A new priority is to show support for our Muslim neighbors in the Chicago region who are suffering due to the political climate. In addition we learned of firsthand accounts of injustice to

Palestinians. Brayton Gray gave a seminar on his experiences with the Christian Peacemaker team during travels in the Middle East.

In conclusion, Oak Park Friends Meeting is blessed with Spiritual fellowship and service to others. However, we continue to strive for deeper Spiritual guidance and communion.

OSHKOSH

We begin this report with the following: "Which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his or her stature?" Matthew 6:27

We have not gained new members. We lost two members to transfer to another monthly. We have not had anyone married in the meeting. No children are present in the meeting. At present we have four members with about five people who attend.

Milwaukee Monthly Meeting Prison Committee approached us last year to see if we could visit with prisoners at the Oshkosh Correctional Institution. The meeting has established a Quaker presence at the prison, Tom Barlow of Oshkosh and Doris Lincoln of Milwaukee. This has grown from two to fifteen men in January, with the help of Chaplain Susan Clark, a Catholic nun.

Oshkosh Friends, acting through AFSC, packaged boxes of school supplies to send to Colombia Quaker Action in a rebel held area.

The neighborhood around the meeting place was invited to celebrate, with the Oshkosh Friends, the 350 years of Friends with them, "I saw that there was a great people to be gathered", George Fox. Several families from the neighborhood joined us for a hot dog and brat lunch and to view a video of the work by AFSC.

As the year was ending, Oshkosh Friends took part in weekly war protests in downtown Oshkosh trying to be true to our testimony against all wars.

-Tom Barlow, Clerk

ROCK VALLEY

We continue to deepen our experiences with the Quaker practice of peaceful conflict resolution. Whether with terrorists or school children, we need to get to know the needs and similarities of one another and share in life-building activities. We find that there is often a need to "keep our mouths shut" and trust the process. Three Friends in our Meeting are actively involved with Friends House Neighborhood Center for Creativity and Nonviolence, which provides community-building programs for children in the neighborhood. We spend most of our Meeting's funds on programs and organizations that promote our values of peace and justice. When others are shocked at our opposition to actions taken by the President, we speak up and strive to recognize that of God in them. And we find that sometimes long term respectful relationships develop. One of our longtime members died in June of this year and the full impact of this loss has not yet been felt by the Meeting. As we move forward we ask you to hold us in the Light.

ROLLA PREPARATIVE MEETING

Our meeting continues to steadfastly meet most every First Day. We also gather for special occasions, everything from birthdays to political and social concerns. Though we do not offer religious education for younger attenders, we hope to reinstitute some form of First Day School this autumn. We continue to be a meaningful presence for each other in diverse ways.

-Alex Primm, Clerk

ST. LOUIS

At this time of uncertainty as to whether a war on Iraq can be averted it is natural that the mood of the Meeting is somber. So much of our efforts and prayers go into this immediate crisis that there is not the usual energy available for other matters. We continue to address our own and our community's racism in practical ways. The Peace Committee suggested that Quakers should be more visible at Afro-American and other Minorities functions and this was

put into practice almost immediately when about 18 Friends marched in the annual Martin Luther King Parade behind a banner saying “St. Louis Quakers.” We distributed fliers and attended the speeches. Since rumor has it that Quakers are extinct we have determined to make sure that people know we are, in fact, very much alive.

Our own lovely Meeting House is a source of worry as well as pleasure. The dreadful acoustics make a mockery of our verbal witness but we have established a fund to pay for a solution to the problem and it is gathering money fairly rapidly. The Fund Raising Committee has had a lot to do with this. Private contributions have helped a great deal. We are loath to borrow from reserves in order to speed the work, because our finances are still precarious. The cost of special tuck-pointing we had to have last year was a huge drain.

One friend who is a sexual offender has been able to come back to Meeting after a long absence and this has been a cause of joy amongst some of us and fear and apprehension amongst a few. However we are trying to deal with the issues of safety and healing in a very practical manner and hope that all will be well.

We have had several new babies in the Meeting and have set up a special “infants” room as a consequence. The babies are passed from hand to hand which they accede to with perfect equanimity. It is not possible by looking at the Mother to know which baby will be in her arms or in the sling. If only all babies had the experience of belonging to a loving community.

The Meeting is growing and we have had several requests for Membership. We still seem only to attract, in general, white, liberal middle-class people but we are hoping that our out-reach and higher visibility will result in more minorities joining us.

One of our young men, currently in the Air Force, has declared himself a Conscientious Objector and the Meeting is being as supportive as possible in helping him in the brave stand he is taking.

Our connections with other countries and peoples continue. La Mesa de Abajo in Mexico, the Lakota nation in Pine Ridge, South Dakota, an Evangelical Quaker school in Burundi and support for Nicaragua through Pro-Nica to name four.

Although the Meeting feels the sadness and weight of the current war preparations, we are doing what we can both practically and prayerfully to avert this horror and are encouraged by the outpouring of anti-war sentiment here and abroad. The meeting, as always, is a source of strength and joy.

All verbal messages are valuable, if not to everyone, they touch the hearts of someone we believe, and some messages are given through by God’s good grace and we are enlightened.

SOUTH BEND

After a year and a half of deliberation, South Bend MM laid down the plan to remodel and lease the basement of a recently moved historic building. The minute of the decision cited Friends’ concerns about accessibility, room for present activities and future growth, proximity of the meeting space to the noise of other activities, and adequacy of restrooms. Our unity in laying down the idea seems very broad, though tinged with sadness. Reflecting on the process, we realized that the hard work of imagining the specifics of this possibility had sharpened our understanding of our needs and wants. It also prompted us to begin talking about the ways in which work is actually distributed among meeting members, and about our “vision” for our meeting community. Some Friends sense that this issue has helped us move toward a deeper listening to each other, grounded in worship. Conversations with a consultant who works with church groups seeking to acquire property also helped clarify a number of practical issues. An ad hoc committee is presently developing specific scenarios of a few different paths to acquiring a meetinghouse of our own.

Two Quaker families have transferred their membership to South Bend MM in the past year: the Thompson-Slaughters (from Princeton MM) and the Meyer-Lees (from New Haven MM). One person has applied for, and been granted, membership: Brad Laird. These Friends’ presence, energy, and varied experience have been both delightful and useful. New attenders have been finding their way to South Bend meeting in a steady trickle over the past two years;

many of them have become regular attenders. Their presence, interest, questions, and participation are very much appreciated.

We have a lively group of children, spread (as usual) over many ages. Friends involved with First Day school seem energetic. Children show growing enthusiasm, and are forming friendships within the meeting. Most adult Friends have been willing to take a turn at summer childcare. Discussions for junior high and high school youth last year were valuable, but variably attended. We are realizing that these older young people can profitably sit through meeting for worship; we are moving toward offering more activities outside of meeting time for them. A rock-climbing weekend is already scheduled!

The national and international political climate seems to have been one factor in attracting new attenders to us. We have had several discussions and worship-sharing sessions around themes of peace, non-violence, conscientious objection, and restorative justice. Many of us have participated in demonstrations and other volunteer activities, or have explored links with other local groups sharing these interests and activities.

Our concern to care for each other well, both spiritually and in other ways, is growing. This past year, as an experiment, we divided our old "Worship, Ministry, and Advancement" committee into two new committees: "Worship, Ministry, and Adult Education" and "Oversight and Caring." Our hope was that this might allow the committees to focus more easily on their tasks. This experiment remains to be evaluated; we may wrestle for some time to come with the functions mentioned in those committee names, and how best to accomplish them.

In the past few months, immediately after meeting for worship, we have begun inviting Friends to share joys, concerns, and personal thoughts arising from worship. We appreciate this deeper sharing, and the bridge it builds between worshipping together and after-meeting conversations over coffee, and also the fact that our children are usually present during this sharing. Friends report that worship seems richer as a result; we hope that it may also lead to more spoken ministry in meeting for worship.

SOUTHERN ILLINOIS

As with Friends the world over, the Southern Illinois Society of Friends found itself challenged by the global and national political environment in the past year. On the first anniversary of the September 11 attacks, we joined with a wonderful array of Carbondale area organizations in a day long observance in remembrance of victims everywhere. Our portion of the community program included a brief introduction of the Friends' peace testimony and concluded with ten minutes of silent reflection. Many of us accompanied the local Peace Coalition visiting our U.S. congressman Jerry Costello where we urged him not to support the U.S. invasion of Iraq. Most everyone associated with our meeting has continued to participate in peace vigils and demonstrations.

We have enjoyed sharing worship with newer regular attenders, and find ourselves blessed with visitors' questions because it challenges us to articulate our spirituality and processes. First Day School includes a teen group led by Tom Alexander that explores philosophical and religious tracts and poetry, and a younger group led by Tom Leverett and Mark Amos that enjoys stories, walks to the SIU campus Japanese Garden, and singing. Our potlucks remain a monthly highlight where our ranks swell to twenty at a table. Last summer, our co-clerk Jayme Long moved to Missouri, and this spring our other co-clerk Lisa Zee moved to California. How we miss them both in worship and in fellowship! We held our annual Easter camp-out and after a stormy night, we welcomed the sun during worship around the campfire. Light in many forms.

A highlight of each year is our annual Young Friends play. This spring Tom Leverett wrote and produced yet another great one: "Turning Point," the story of the bombing of Sterling Hall at the University of Wisconsin-Madison in 1970. The kids enjoyed wearing tie-dyes and bandanas, and saying "Far out!" and "Groovy!" At the same time, they explored the painful social ramifications of war, including massive protests, military draft issues, and the diffi-

cult question of how far protest can and should go. There were two Viet Nam era veterans in our audience, who were impressed and said that the play evoked vivid memories. We hope to share all of Tom's great Young Friends play scripts with other meetings.

- Dawn Amos, clerk

URBANA-CHAMPAIGN

The big news is that we held our groundbreaking festivities for the new meeting house March 15. We gathered in fog at the Lot at 1904 East Main, Urbana, at 11:30, with as many spades and shovels as we could muster, because we had decided this would be a do-it-yourself groundbreaking—everybody digging in. Silent worship followed. After the symbolic groundbreaking, about 40 Friends converged on Wesley Foundation for the pizza party. We have raised almost \$100,000 for the new meeting house from 95 contributors. Our thanks go out to all those contributors. We are considering going ahead now to install the commercial kitchen the city codes require churches to have if they serve the public, and also putting in the room dividers for the Sunday School spaces. We may have to take out a small mortgage to finish the meeting house, but we have some Friends offering us small interest-free loans. Perhaps those loans will allow us to finish building without taking on a mortgage. We expect the excavator to begin work any day now, and the structure is supposed to be completed by July 15. (NOTE: The contractor is behind schedule. So what else is new?) This is an exciting time in the life of the meeting.

Nathan Richard Lasersohn was born May 27, 2002, at two pounds, two ounces to Sharon Haworth and Peter Lasersohn. He spent several months in NICU. Meeting helped by carrying in food when he was born and again when he came home from the hospital. He sometimes attends committee meetings and gifts us all with his baby smile. Nathan made his first public appearance at the groundbreaking pizza party.

The prayer circle began its existence in order to pray for Nathan, but we rapidly realized we had lots of things needing prayer. For awhile we met twice a week, on Sundays at 10:00 and also on Thursdays at noon at the Mittenthals. Later we agreed to lay down the early Sunday prayer circle and instead invite Friends to request prayers for their concerns during worship.

The study group has just completed reading Lloyd Lee Wilson's *Essays on the Quaker Vision of Gospel Order*, and on April 1 will begin reading *The Cloud of Unknowing*. We particularly enjoyed Wilson's chapter on Discernment and Leadings, which spoke to many of us in a special way. We have appreciated the attendance at study group of Gardiner Stillwell, who blesses us all with his knowledge and experience.

We have taken advantage of the conferences offered nearby this spring: Mariellen Gilpin and Glori Yoder went to the Clerking workshop with Arthur Larrabee at Pendle Hill Midwest-Evanston; Mariellen Gilpin also went to the Leadership and Responding to Leadings workshop with Janice Domanik near Princeton, Illinois. Helen Satterthwaite attended the Nurturing the Nurturer workshop in Wisconsin last fall, and Jay Mittenthal has attended the Peacemaking and Prayer workshop, also at Pendle Hill Midwest-Evanston. Charlotte Green, Joan Nelshopen and Jay Mittenthal also participated in a Fellowship of Reconciliation workshop, "From Violence to Wholeness." These conferences enrich all our lives, not just the lives of the actual participants.

The Religious Education committee planned two parties for the entire meeting: a Strawberry Fest last spring, and Christmas caroling at the Champaign County Nursing Home. We also had a Christmas party together, and the annual Peace Bazaar under the inspired leadership of Joan Nelshopen again raised over \$3000 for seven peace and justice organizations.

Peace and Service has sent several letters opposing militarism to newspapers and government officials. Cam Satterthwaite and Merlin Taber responded to newspaper interviews about religious pacifism. We have all appreciated the exposure for the meeting that these efforts have provided.

We have welcomed some new attenders: Doug Clough, Charlotte Green, and Jeremy and Hether Sebens.

Mariellen Gilpin continues to edit *What Canst Thou Say?*, a newsletter on Quakers, mysticism, and contemplative prayer. This publication is put together almost entirely by email, since the editorial team lives widely distributed across the country, and even in Belize. Several members of our meeting wrote articles for the May 2003 issue on Birth and Rebirth: Terri Mittenthal, Jay Mittenthal, Dorothy Neumann, and Gardiner Stillwell (who wrote about the life of Charlotte Green's mother, Janet Sawyer). In addition, Beth Schobernd and Carolyn Wilbur Treadway from Heartland Worship Group wrote for the May issue, and Marti Matthews of Northside meeting, Chicago, has written an article for the August issue. Mariellen was asked by one of the other editors of WCTS, "I notice several articles from Urbana-Champaign meeting, Mariellen. Is that your meeting, or is it just a particularly rich source?" Mariellen's answer: "Both!"