

**Gunpowder Friends Meeting**  
**Spiritual State of the Meeting Report**  
**2015**

“It is not unusual for us to have a Meeting for Worship when there is no vocal ministry, but the presence of the divine is powerful, and this ministers in the silence. This roots all of what we do. It is a mystery—I do not have adequate words for it, but I think we share this sense in a very rich, deep, powerful and empowering way.”

In this way, one Friend describes the spirit of our Gunpowder Friends community and its grounding in the deep silence of Meeting for Worship. Out of this grounding we help each other attend to the Spirit in our practices and programs, including Spiritual Formation program, Silent Retreat days, Bible Study, First Day School, monthly Forums, and other activities. In all these gatherings there is a broad and deep commitment to listening, seeking, and caring in order to be open to a deepening call. One Friend spoke of a responsive flexibility in our Meeting, a testament to our love for one another and a mark of growing maturity as a spiritual community. Another Friend speaks of her awareness of a spectrum of spiritual gifts and development, and is grateful to those who share such gifts. She says, “I think of them as the leavening in the Meeting, not only elevating the spiritual state in general, but revealing spiritual gifts in those who do not recognize their own.”

Our Meeting community welcomes newcomers and visitors in a genuine and spontaneous way, whether a new individual or family that arrives on a First Day morning, or guests who gather for Quarterly meeting, a memorial service, or a wedding. This hospitality is a testament to the care and attention we extend to others, and we in turn are enriched by the spiritual gifts brought to us by visitors and new attenders.

The children of our First Day School bring joy to our Meeting. We continue to work to accommodate the needs of the children given the wide age range from pre-school to high school. “The vision of First Day School is to teach our young people that our testimonies are not only words but how we live,” says one teacher. A highlight of the year was the Christmas program when our young Friends not only performed an original play, but also prepared and hosted simple lunch at the rise of Meeting.

We are blessed to have wide generational diversity, including a number of older Friends, many from the Broadmead retirement community. Some queries have arisen: How do we attend to the unique needs of our aging Friends? How do we best tend to honoring, valuing, encouraging

their presence and wisdom? One Friend noted his concern about attending to the ends of our age spectrum as well as to our working parents and their children in First Day School.

We were saddened by the deaths of a number of beloved Gunpowder Friends in 2015. Memorial Meetings and our annual Memorial Day gathering are times when we celebrate the lives of those who have died, affirming how much our community is carried forward through the gifts of each of us.

The Meeting is grateful to the many people who work diligently and lovingly in, and for, our community. We are sustained by the commitment of many Friends, those serving on committees (Ministry and Counsel, Care and Oversight, Trustees, Property, Finance, Nominating, Hospitality, First Day School) and those serving in other capacities, both official and unofficial. We are known to others as a beautiful rural meeting, and indeed our physical space and grounds minister to us and to others. The thoughtful and spirit-led stewardship of the Property Committee assures the healthy maintenance of our Meeting House and grounds. Thanks to the diligent work of Friends on our library collection this year, a rich variety of resources are readily accessible in pleasant and tidy surroundings.

We appreciate the presence of those in our community who are mindful of the environment. A working group has come together to move forward the spiritually grounded work arising from our 2011 Spirit and Nature Minute. There has been a focus on care of the environment in the First Day School as well. This enriching and important work is a gift to the Meeting community.

A year ago a member spoke passionately about diversity and racial injustice as a spiritual issue that is “more about what we attend to than who sits in the room,” and we have taken steps to educate and open ourselves on such topics as white privilege and the ways we, often unwittingly, participate in and perpetuate racism. Three Forums and a presentation at Chesapeake Quarterly Meeting (hosted by Gunpowder) on the topic of diversity and racial justice were well attended. Two members of our Ministry and Counsel Committee regularly attend the Stony Run Working Group on Racism. There is strong interest in continuing this work in 2016.

Gunpowder Meeting is well connected with the larger Quaker world in a number of ways. Some Gunpowder Friends faithfully attend Quarterly Meeting and the various gatherings and committees of Baltimore Yearly Meeting, keeping us informed and involved in current business and concerns. As a Meeting, we are committed to the work of FCNL, regularly sharing updates with one another and holding monthly letter-writing sessions. Others contribute to the wider Quaker community by serving on the Boards of Broadmead and Friends School of Baltimore.

We are also connected with our local non-Quaker faith communities in our ongoing support of and contributions to the United Churches Assistance Network (UCAN) in northern Baltimore County.

In any Meeting community, transitions occur as members age. We encourage new and younger Friends to become involved in the life of the Meeting according to their gifts and leadings. We will continue to be mindful of the importance of invitation and mentoring in this process.

**Approved 3-20-2016**

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*This report was compiled by members of Ministry and Counsel. The wider Meeting community had an opportunity to contribute through a worship sharing Forum held 10<sup>th</sup> First Month 2016. To frame our sharing, we used the Baltimore Yearly Meeting (BYM) Vision Statement along with the following queries:*

- 1. Where and how is the BYM Vision Statement alive at Gunpowder?*
- 2. What is most needed to deepen the spiritual life of the Meeting and to strengthen its witness in behalf of Friends' testimonies to the world? (from 1988 BYM Faith and Practice)*