

Gunpowder Friends Meeting (GFM)
Spiritual State of the Meeting Report 2016
Approved 3/19/17

Our report reflects input from 38 GFM members and attenders who met in three worship-sharing sessions, one at the rise of Meeting, one at Broadmead Retirement Community, and one during the First Day School (FDS) Meeting for Business. Queries used at these gatherings were a blending of suggestions from BYM Ministry and Pastoral Care, the Baltimore Area Working Group on Racism, our Spirit and Nature group, First Day School, Ministry and Counsel, and other Gunpowder Friends. The responses of participants in the three worship-sharing sessions centered on the four topics listed below.

Spiritual Depth

The spiritual grounding of our GFM community is manifest in our gathered Meetings for Worship, our vibrant Spiritual Formation program, our spirit-led Meetings for Worship with a Concern for Business, and in other programs such as Bible Study and our monthly Silent Retreats. At the close of Meeting for Worship, Friends share joys and concerns from a deep spiritual wellspring.

“I think a great strength of this Meeting is its spiritual centeredness and a measured vocal ministry out of the silence.”

“A great thing that Friends do is Spiritual Formation. This is a great joy in the Meeting.”

“I am grateful that Spiritual Formation is now happening at Broadmead. This is very helpful and a joy.”

“I see trust manifested in the sharing of joys and sorrows at the closing moments of worship. These are deeply felt sharings that are received and responded to with deep care, gentle love, and follow-through. People who have shared later said how they felt so supported by the Meeting.”

“When we come to decisions, some of which have been difficult for us or have taken a good deal of time, there is a pervasive sense of trust that together we will come down right in the place we ought to be.”

“At Gunpowder Meeting for Worship I see a lot of serious faces, deep in contemplation and worship. I see a range of ages. I see a lot of happy people, especially as we greet each other at the rise of Meeting. This grounds me in my spiritual life.”

Community

Friends shared many observations about our life as a Meeting community.

“I am happy to have this community and I treasure the essence and spirit of the Meeting.”

“I am thrilled and nurtured and comforted by the authenticity of the Meeting as a whole and all of the individuals therein. I feel lucky to look around the room and see the wonderful leaders and role models. I trust the people in this room to lead me in the right way. What I get from this Meeting is a constant reminder of how to be in the world and how to be as authentic and engaged as possible.”

“I observe at times in myself, and possibly the Meeting, the risk of becoming comfortable; and comfortable is good because it makes the Meeting a refuge, a retreat, a place of affirmation, support and strength. ‘Too comfortable’ may sap our energy. We try to sustain the energy to work on long-term issues – the environment, racism, and other chronic social ills. So I find an ironic appreciation for the election year and election results for the dose of spiritual adrenaline.”

“I think a challenge we face as a community is staying spiritually grounded and following Spirit’s lead in how we address our concerns. It is hard when dealing with timely issues because seasoning things can take time. Finding the balance is crucial. We need to pay attention to what this community and individuals are led to do. We are healthy in this regard, and we need to step forward with a great deal of openness and willingness to seek balance in how we act and work together.”

“We have a reputation of being very open, and people are drawn here.”

“I feel joy in having all the newcomers. When I first started attending we were lucky to have eight or so people. It is hard for me to believe that when I come on First Days I see upwards of 30 to 50 people here.”

Social Action

During the past year our Meeting community has continued work on two major areas of focus: becoming an anti-racist community and caring for the environment.

“Our work in becoming an anti-racist community continues to be spiritually grounded. We recognize that this is both inner and outer work. In the past year there were three forums: in one, we learned about the Maryland Alliance for Justice Reform, in another, we did an assessment of where we are on the continuum of becoming an anti-racist community; in the third, we talked about personal stories of white privilege. Several members of the Meeting attend the Baltimore Area Working Group on Racism and are active in Maryland Alliance for Justice Reform. We are doing well in this area but need to continue to avail ourselves of the many resources available to us as we move forward.”

“The challenge is in being consistent.”

“I see a ripple effect as those with knowledge and insight regarding best environmental practices share them with us and raise awareness. Deeper appreciation and understanding of the natural world and its needs can carry over to work and home and beyond.”

“The Meeting’s concerns on Spirit and Nature and on racism rub off on the young people and this is very positive in demonstrating action to them.”

Intergenerational Community

There were expressions of appreciation for our elders who live at Broadmead Retirement Community and the Broadmead Friends returned that appreciation along with some suggestions.

“We are fortunate to have so much knowledge and wisdom in the Meeting, which comes from our great array of elders. What strikes me as practically unique is the generosity and humility that comes with this strength. It builds trust.”

“We (at Broadmead) as a community could offer services to the children so they could learn some things from us. They would be more than welcome. We could play and work together.”

“Music would be a wonderful gift for the children to bring...for both those who receive it and those who bring it.”

“I appreciate your coming here (to Broadmead) to seek our input for the report.”

During the FDS Meeting for Business, Young Friends talked about their commitment to the FDS community. Our new FDS format for teens includes guest speakers and worship-sharing.

“I feel that when the younger Friends go to their activity, one of us is helping them and making sure they have a good time. We care about them, so we act in response to that care.”

“I feel a strong connection to adult Friends. They show us our responsibility. They model for us a way to be in the world.”

“What adult Friends say can really change my opinion and how I think about something.”

“Adult Friends talk to us about our lives and they want to know us on a personal level.”

“I like the way we do queries and talk about them and have more independence than we used to.”

“With the new format, we can think for ourselves.”

Meeting adults had this to say about FDS.

“Our Meeting’s greatest joys are provided by the children. Their presence alone augurs well not only for their developing values but the viability of the Meeting over time.”

“I feel very positive about the youth program. The number of Young Friends attending is astonishing.”

The strength of our Gunpowder community is anchored in the work of dedicated individuals and committees. Special thanks to Property Committee which has orchestrated several projects this year, including solid new doors that suit our historic building and refurbishment of the porch benches that we use for warm weather worship. Our handsome Meetinghouse overlooking beautiful countryside is a source of spiritual nurture for many.