

Gainesville Monthly Meeting
Spiritual State of the Meeting 2018
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As we reflect on the Spiritual State of our Meeting, we see a meeting with a strong spiritual foundation upon which we are building. We are beginning to experience the results of a deliberate choice to build that spiritual foundation as our first priority, including a notable increase in a vital and robust vocal ministry.

Over the last several years we have lost a number of longtime stalwart members to death or declining cognitive function. We have seen other members of our community come together in a sense of love and spiritual commitment to support those who are in need. We see this in a concrete way in the clean-up after our social hour on First Day. We went out of our comfort zone of assigning clean-up duties and simply announced that it was the responsibility of the entire community. After a few months, Friends who seldom helped with clean-up began to take a turn with the dishwasher or scraping plates. Others began to linger longer, sometimes for hours. Conversations deepened into many more spiritual topics.

In April we organized a one-day Meeting retreat at a park. We spent the morning exploring our individual spiritual journeys. In the afternoon, we turned our attention to the things we liked most about the Meeting and things we would like to change. From those suggestions, we began a Mid-Week Meeting, incorporating a time of Spiritual Explorations, a simple meal, and Meeting for Worship. This is primarily organized and facilitated by 2 young adults, with some assistance from Ministry and Nurture in finding materials. We added Wi-Fi to the meetinghouse to facilitate this group as it explores various avenues of spirituality. The existing Spiritual Deepening group was enfolded into the Mid-Week Meeting.

We are experimenting somewhat with our Meeting for Business practices. We are asking for agenda items, including proposed minutes, reports, etc., well in advance so that they may be shared with the meeting community prior to the meeting for business. Our goal is to promote a more spirit-led atmosphere in the actual meeting as we discern a way forward. One of our challenges is a lack of understanding among some members of the community of Quaker process. We have planned a threshing session early in 2019 to work together on issues such as the roles of committees.

We are also experimenting with different modes of communication. We have laid down our printed newsletter; a one page printed 'bulletin' with the calendar for the month, the next month, and the advices and queries is available in the foyer. The information that was available in the newsletter is available on our website. Announcements of events is also available on our Facebook page.

We continue to reach out into the community. In 2018 we experimented with a series of ads on Facebook. The ads brought more traffic to our website and Facebook page. A few individuals came and tried Meeting for Worship. We have continued our long-term support of the Guatemalan Scholarship Fund. We have provided sweat equity support as well as monetary support to the local sanctuary church. We continue to have a Moral Mondays

witness in support of immigration justice. In 2018 we added a project with the Caring and Sharing Learning School to assist with an ongoing garden project. The Peace and Social Concerns Committee led a forum on the Rise of Fascism and is developing materials to share with the wider community.

With the increased focus on spiritual activities, the broadening of modes of communication, and expansion of the group that carries the ordinary weekly chores, we have drawn closer together.