

Friends Meeting of San Antonio  
State of the Meeting Report

*January 2016*

A year ago, Friends Meeting found itself facing in two directions. Our State of the Meeting Report celebrated our vitality: our active embrace of work with Central American refugees, our active new attenders, a deep (though not constant) sense of the Spirit moving through us, and our ability to use our Meetinghouse to provide a home to kindred groups. At the same time, that report noted our aging membership, our inability to staff our committees, the drifting away of too many long-time members and attenders, and the dearth of young people who once made the Meeting more vibrant. Citing the words of William Penn, we hoped that love would see us through.

This situation has not changed. Again, our Meeting has been active. Individuals in the Meeting have continued their work with refugees and have felt supported and nurtured by the Meeting as a whole. We have raised considerable money for their aid and have worked with members of other congregations to provide imprisoned refugees with services and contact to sustain them. An article in Friends Journal described the immigrants' situation and the Meeting's response to it. We put on a May Fair to raise money for the RAICES Bond Fund, which drew people of many faiths.

We have also held two Silent Retreats, at which Friends have found great spiritual nourishment. Individuals have also stepped forward to further out spiritual life. One member has led a Quaker study group in her home. A couple has sponsored monthly mid-week Meetings for Worship in theirs. We have maintained our twice-a-month Forums, either discussing social and spiritual issues among ourselves or inviting members of the wider community to speak with us about their work for social betterment. In December, we thoughtfully considered how to respond to the new laws about carrying weapons, and about how to respond, were there to be a dangerous situation here when people are present.

Together with others who use our building, we have held community workdays to spiff up our grounds and gardens. Our Property Committee has supervised several major repairs to our buildings. We are beginning to reach out to the neighborhood so that people know that ours is a religious setting, not just an empty building and a play place.

At the same time, the Meeting's ordinary work continues to fall on ever fewer shoulders. Several committees remain largely unstaffed, as family crises, travel for work, and age limit Friends ability to participate in them. For example, we are currently unable to staff our Ministry and Oversight Committee, making it difficult to care for the Meeting's spiritual health. Our Education Committee is nearly empty, making it hard to sustain a children's education program. The co-Clerks of our Peace and Social Concerns Committee are both traveling for the next several months and another member has had to step back because of family illness; this makes it hard for that committee to provide spiritual care for individual Friends' and the Meeting's work in the wider community. Our Outreach Committee no longer functions as a whole but now consists of individual members who have volunteered to handle specific tasks. These tasks are done and done well, but this makes it more difficult to take on new initiatives.

The problem is not that we have too many committees. The problem is that we have too few people who are available and experienced enough to take on our common work. We cannot burden new attenders with these tasks – and we have several wonderful new attenders; they need time to settle

into Meeting, to become accustomed to Quaker ways, and to discern their own callings. We thus find ourselves asking experienced members to take on multiple tasks. This is not sustainable.

In order to prepare this report, we posted large sheets of paper in the Meetinghouse and asked Friends to write on them their concerns about Meeting and also their sense of Meeting's blessings. Under "Concerns", Friends wrote about our lack of youth and a youth program, our lack of young families, and our inability to staff our committees (which we have discussed above). Under "Blessings", Friends listed our work with immigrants, some active new members and attenders, and our "vigorous Property Committee". Friends also celebrated "the folks in the meeting" and "Friends caring beyond Sunday worship". One Friend wrote: "We are in community together. I feel it!" This sentiment, too, is part of our situation.

We have been pleased to welcome Fabian Juarez as a new member and Kristal and Ted Melvin as sojourners from their home meeting in Olympia, Washington. We mourn the loss of Sal DiGiacomo, a long-time attender for whom we held a memorial meeting. We also mourn the loss of Susan Carter, who was raised in our meeting a generation ago.

Above all, we celebrate our spiritual life together.