

Red Cedar Friends
State of the Meeting Report
May 6, 2007
submitted by Becky Payne, clerk

We have faced challenges and opportunities this year, both within our meeting and out in the world. Years of preparatory work are leading us toward building our own meetinghouse; construction is scheduled to start later this spring. In the wider community, war, ecological crises, political instability, and inhumane treatment of the underprivileged have drawn us together on many occasions for worship and work.

Many social justice actions have seen strong Red Cedar participation. Every Friday since the beginning of the war, a group has met to bear witness for peace in front of the state capitol. Some of us have led or participated in peace marches, petition drives and meetings with our legislators. Some traveled in January to Washington D.C. to rally for peace and hand deliver letters to our senators. We have co-hosted speakers for justice, including Jim Wallis from *Sojourners' Magazine*, and Dr. Naba Hamid, who spoke eloquently on the plight of her fellow Iraqis. We've just agreed as a meeting to host the Michigan display of *Eyes Wide Open*, the AFSC-produced exhibit against the war.

We provide representatives to the Peace Education Center, the Greater Lansing Network Against War and Injustice, and the Michigan Peace Team. Ann Francis is on the Great Lakes Regional Executive Committee of AFSC, and Susan Waltz is on the AFSC's International Programs Executive Committee. We have set up information tables at local events, including at a powerful worship service regarding the loss of same-sex partner rights in Michigan. Many of us worked during the election to support social justice issues.

Following the purchase of a building lot, we have met in a series of "barnraising" meetings to discern the sense of the meeting concerning building our own meetinghouse. In March, we looked at the latest financial data and building proposals, and agreed that we were clear to begin construction this spring. Seeking the sense of the meeting forced us to consider who we are and what message we want to give by spending our resources in this way. We expressed our hope that this building can be a witness to our values by demonstrating "green" building techniques and by providing us with a permanent, visible base from which to do our social justice work. As it stands now, the building should meet the LEED standard for environmental sustainability practices in construction and operation. Our discussions have led us to remind ourselves that it is not the specific shape and design of the meetinghouse that defines us, it is how we honor and include all of us in the process that will be the gift of lasting value.

We want to acknowledge those in our meeting who have so generously offered us materials, skills, loans and gifts of money for the building. And we were thrilled that our building project was supported by the wider Quaker community at a fundraiser held for us at Friends' Lake last winter.

The Building Committee has worked diligently to keep us informed and to honor the sense of the meeting as they go between Meeting and architects, contractors and

city officials. And in anticipation of having our own space, we are forming a Building and Grounds Committee to maintain the structure once it is built.

To get acquainted with the Old Town Community, where we will be moving, we participated in events there, helping with street festivals and their Thanksgiving food basket program. And with the people of Old Town, we mourned the tragic death of Robert Busby, owner of the Creole Gallery. He was a generous and caring man who graciously helped our meeting as we worked to become known and accepted by the merchants there.

Our First-Day program includes 30 children. The Religious Education Committee has built a solid program that attracts and supports children, so each week, we seem to have more. It is a joy to see so many young ones enter our meeting right before we rise each first day. We hosted two intergenerational events, a visit to the "corn maze" last fall and to "Small Animal Day" at MSU this spring. The R.E. Committee, in conjunction with the Adult Religious Education Committee, held a series of Parenting Meetings in regards to raising children with Quaker values.

The Membership and Outreach Committee published a Newcomers Pamphlet. Last fall, a series of Quaker 101 meetings were well attended, and served people from our 9:30 and 12:30 meetings. They recently held a gathering for attenders to talk about writing letters for membership.

The Hospitality Committee organized us into "Friendly Feast" groups to meet for meals and socializing. They have been generous with their time by seeing to the food, room set-up and other details that allow our meetings to be welcoming and hospitable.

The Worship and Pastoral Care Committee surveyed us on the quality of our worship and shared insights to help us deepen our worship. They continue to hold Clearness committees for those who ask, and provide financial or spiritual help when needed.

In addition, we offer monthly Meetings for Peace, Meetings for Healing, and a Caregivers Support Group. We hold a yearly Meeting for Remembrance. In the spring we honored our children by giving each one a book especially selected for him or her. New births prompted us to host a "Baby Naming" in honor of Grant Pennock, Elinor Kempainen, and Roslyn Zimmerman. We welcomed Stephanie Charlot's request for membership, and Will Alexander's transfer of membership from California. We mourned the deaths of Jim Ivey and Ruth Pino.

David Plank and Susan Drabik were married in a Quaker marriage with our support, but not under our care, as they are moving to California.

Mary Pino welcomed seven children into her family by adoption. Babies were born to two young adults who grew up in our meeting, Michael Legrou and David Anderson, while Dan Pierce was married in California. Elizabeth Graham continues in the Peace Corps stationed in Senegal.

In February, we hosted the LEYM Representatives meeting. Forty three attended, and expressed their gratitude to us for providing meals, lodging, oversight and facilities.

Eleven of us attended LEYM yearly meeting, and five traveled to Friends General Conference last summer, with our teenage Friend, Katie Nolan carrying out her vision of having area teens travel to FGC together via Amtrak. Katie Nolan, Hanna Guenin-Lelle and Carolyn Lejuste are on the planning board for Friends General Conference.

Our 9:30am meeting continues to meet at Everybody Reads Bookstore, with 5-14 attenders each week. Our 12:30pm meeting has averaged 41 attenders weekly.

Albion Worship Group continues under our care, averaging about 5-6 attenders on a First Day.

As we look out upon a troubled world, we are aware that we are extremely fortunate. The question arises: how do we best reach out to those in need without feeling overwhelmed or becoming too busy to support each other?

We are glad to be traveling through life with such wonderful Friends. We look forward to this coming year with hope and confidence.