

State of the Meeting Report
Red Cedar Friends
May 31, 2008

Red Cedar has seen an average weekly attendance increase of close to 20% this year to around 50 in the two meetings. The increase is especially strong in our first day school program. At the May 2007 book-gifting, we gave books to 30 children. This year there will be 41.

The growth in numbers has not diminished the quality of our worship. Though there may be more spoken ministry and more busyness during meeting, gatherings are still deep and spirit led. We welcome the vibrancy within our group.

Accommodating a larger meeting, along with building a meetinghouse and engaging the community through peace and social justice work, are three areas that have taken much of our attention. For the most part, we have been able to remain close and centered throughout. Worship and business meetings have remained welcoming places of trust and community.

There have been many meeting activities this year. The children raised money and made gifts to buy Christmas presents for a local family and felt very tender toward this act of sharing. They continue to have regular business meetings and they invited adults to a God Panel to talk about their experiences of the spirit. Parents formed an online discussion group called "Our Young Friends." To further integrate youths into Quakerism, we have agreed to pay expenses or to help in non-monetary ways so that all children of meeting can attend FGC or other Quaker gatherings.

Many thanks to the Religious Education Committee for making room for more young participants. We should not forget that while this is joyous, it can be taxing on those who work with the children and we should remain open to helping where we can.

We continue to sponsor the Albion Worship Group and welcome seeing them on occasion when we visit back and forth.

This year we welcomed new babies Ethan Charlot, Yehva Dierauer and just this month, Helena Tarbell. A few people have moved away: Erica Thomas and Jose Moncada moved to California, Genia, Ame and Roselyn Zimmerman went to North Carolina, Kristen Perry moved to Kentucky. Edna Whittier recently transferred her membership to Virginia. We miss all of them.

The Adult Religious Education Committee sponsored two events to brighten the long winter. Twenty-five attended a day-long retreat on our spiritual journeys, and ten to fifteen met weekly in February to read and discuss Walt Whitman's *Song of Myself*.

The Building Committee continues its long work toward construction of our meetinghouse. Their diligence and patience should be noted. It is no small feat to balance the needs of architects, contractors, financiers, city regulators and us Quakers. They are balancing environmental stewardship, right use of resources (both financial and real), space and accessibility needs. The economy worsens and costs keep rising. We hold the Building Committee in the light as they move toward beginning construction yet this summer.

To help prepare for being building owners, we formed a Building and Grounds committee. This committee has developed a set of guidelines for the use of the new

building, and is coordinating maintenance of the existing lot. We are considering an Aesthetics committee to help select paint colors, art, and other details. Others have volunteered to help with landscaping, outreach and groundbreaking ceremonies in our new community.

To that end, the Membership and Outreach Committee visited North Presbyterian Church and the Old Town Commercial Association to introduce themselves to the community and discuss opportunities and challenges in the area.

Their committee also finished an important work by bringing forth a well-considered policy on membership.

Members and attenders remain active in wider Quaker gatherings. Last year fifteen attended FGC Gathering and 6-9 went to LEYM. Ann Francis sits on the Regional Executive Committee of AFSC. As clerk of the AFSC Board's International Program Executive Committee, Susan Waltz visited Indonesia to review AFSC's work in response to the 2004 tsunami. Katie Nolan was co-clerk of the 2007 high school gathering of FGC. Merry Stanford is serving as assistant LEYM Clerk. Becky Payne is the local representative to the Peace Education Center, Richard Lee serves on the MSU Religious Advisors Association, and continues his monthly Meetings for Healing. Several in our midst are leaders of The Greater Lansing Network Against War and Injustice (GLNAWI).

Last May we agreed to oversee the Michigan Eyes Wide Open exhibit from AFSC on the human costs of war. This exhibit has long been a powerful peace witness. Having the exhibit under our care has necessitated a lot of planning and oversight. It has gone out seven times to cities around Michigan, and we are scheduling more all the time.

Friends have been a constant presence at area peace rallies and community events. We planned and hosted AFSC's Speak for Peace Tour, which brought together a war veteran and an Iraqi refugee to speak for ending the conflict in Iraq. Some spoke at a rally for veteran's health care at the state capitol, and we were on the radio and in print with appeals for peace on the fifth anniversary of the bombing of Iraq in March. Jim Anderson recently addressed the congregation of Edgewood United Church of Christ on the costs of war. Steve Osborn and Dorean Koenig helped organize the International Day of Peace activities. Erick Williams spoke to a community group on Gandhi's birthday. Yvonne Lefave and Juleann Vittone organized a very successful river cleanup in Lansing. We were co-sponsors of Jim Wallis' visit to People's Church. The clerk spoke on meeting's behalf to an interfaith Christmas service.

We hosted visits to Red Cedar by Solar Circle and Friends School in Detroit. David and Nina Castro organized a book sale, raising \$700 for medical clinics and soccer leagues for street kids in Lima, Peru.

Thanks to the work of Dorean Koenig, we received a \$3000 grant to put together a community voter education project. The grant money has been matched with \$5,500 primarily from Cooley Law School. There will be two events planned for next fall.

As wars drag on, environmental challenges become more critical, and world wide food and energy shortages cause pain and turmoil, we try to balance local, national and international needs and responses. Recognizing the increased need, Red Cedar just agreed to increase our outreach donations to non-profit organizations.

Red Cedar remains a powerful center in so many lives. Quaker meetings are both humbling and empowering. We remain committed to making a difference whenever we can, shining our measure of light without fear and hoping it brings peace and justice wherever possible.

In the light,

Becky Payne
Clerk, Red Cedar Friends Meeting
East Lansing, Michigan