

Red Cedar Friends State of the Meeting Report

Submitted by Judith Morrigan, Clerk, Fifth Month, 2011

We marked our first full year in our new Meeting House on Turner Street in Lansing's Old Town at the end of March this year. We are enjoying all the pleasures, great and small, of having a home of our own and adjusting to the committed work it takes to care for it. It is wonderful to have bulletin boards to put up announcements and our children's artwork. It makes us feel a part of the community to have many different groups renting our space and using it not just on Sundays.

Building and Grounds Committee has been kept very busy learning about our building and how to keep it running. Some decisions have been made to hire some of the cleaning and snowplowing work done so as to lighten the regular responsibilities of care. We continue to be pleased and surprised at how many folks want to rent the building. The following list includes some who have rented just once and some who have rented many times: Writers workshop, Women's Center retreat, Ingham County Health Department, Haze Art Gallery, Old Town Commercial Association, Stormfield Theatre, Sistrum Women's chorus, Lansing Area Aids Network, Sand Tray Workshop, PHI- a health professionals support group, Eyes Wide Open, Compassionate Feast, Insight Meditation, 16 Days Campaign, Green Pastures Quarterly Meeting, and the Greater Lansing Interfaith Task Force on Immigration. Some groups have paid rental fees and some have had fees waived.

A few ad hoc committees have been formed to work on things that still need to be done. We have a Sound Committee and they have proposed the installation of some sound adsorption panels for the All Purpose Room. Our Landscape Committee is working on a small pathway in our woods at the back of the property, and plans for the backyard.

The Building Committee did a final walk through with the architect and contractor this spring to determine if we are ready to sign off on the status of the project and lay down our Building Committee. They are making steady progress toward wrapping up the final tasks that will allow the committee to be laid down in good order. We are celebrating their more than 10 year commitment and hard work and are smiling with the pleasure of seeing our dreams come true.

We have made some changes in Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business to accommodate our new location. We decided to hold it on the second First Day of the Month so it would be possible for us to be more involved with Old Town's many activities that happen on the first Sunday of the month. We continue to have our monthly potluck on the Third First Day. That leaves First and Fourth First Days available for Adult Religious Education to offer presentations.

Finance Committee and the Treasurer have taken seriously Meeting's charge to ensure that the ratio of program to operating expenses remains high as we live into our new Meeting House. Building on an earlier program expansion called Connecting Kids to Quakers (which supports all of Meeting's young Friends to attend regional

and national gatherings where they meet other Quakers) and our regular Outreach contributions to peace and social justice concerns, this year we set up a new line item called Supporting Quaker Infrastructure which will make regular contributions to the organizations (such as AFSC, FCNL, FGC, Friends Journal) that Meeting depends on to lead, educate and give voice to our Quaker practice. The committee has also developed a more informative format for our treasurer's report, which sends detailed numbers to committee clerks, but concentrates the Meeting for Business report on overview numbers accompanied by commentary from the committee interpreting and explaining the meaning we make of our in-depth review. We are pleased that our budget- which totals 240% of its 2004-05 levels- is being met by steady and generous contributions from our expanding roster of members and attenders.

Hospitality Committee has been working hard this year on making our kitchen operational. This year it has progressed from bare walls and folding tables acting as counters to installed stainless steel counters and complete dishwashing capability. In compliance with modern wisdom about not using cupboards, we have rolling stainless steel carts on which to store our dishes. Refrigeration and a center worktable have been added also. We are now gathering estimates for a gas range and hood that will complete the kitchen. Procedures have been set up for potluck and general clean up to help those who volunteer. Help with tasks in the kitchen and providing snacks is always welcome.

Religious Education has continued to respond creatively to our growing number of young people involved in First Day Activities. This year a new group emerged composed mostly of middle school aged Friends. They decided to call themselves "The Lamps" and work on service projects like gathering books for the Capitol Area Literacy Coalition, raising money for the Humane Society and Mid-Michigan Cat Rescue. They are also planning to send some school supplies and books to a school in Kenya.

The Young Friends' Meeting for Business was begun with the assistance of the Religious Education Committee shortly before the Meeting moved into its new home in March 2010. Young Friends participate in the Meeting for Business during their regularly scheduled First Day School session, and range in age from about 6 years old through high school. The meeting reports through its clerk to the Monthly Meeting, and young Friends are encouraged to attend the Monthly Meeting, especially during the portion of the meeting when their report is made. The adult advisors proposed a slate to constitute a Naming Committee of three young Friends, which was approved by the young Friends assembled. The Naming Committee proposed a slate of officers, which was brought before young Friends and also approved. Young Friends determined that they would meet at least once per quarter, and that officers would serve for six-month terms, which would be renewable. To date the following have served: Robin Miller, Clerk; Teagan Grady, Assistant Clerk; and Madeline Chomentowsky, Recording Clerk. Issues that have come before the body have been initiated by the young Friends themselves, and include a concern about having more field trips as part of First Day School; a concern about entering Meeting for Worship in a composed way; brainstorming solutions to a conflict with some adult Friends about use of the Meeting House space; and young Friends' desire to continue having Meeting for Business. This experiment in learning Quaker Faith and Practice through the actual experience of Meetings for Worship with Attention to Business will be evaluated by young Friends and by the Religious Education Committee at the end of the program year.

Green Pastures Quarterly held their annual winter gathering at our Meeting House this year in January. The focus was on Intergenerational Worship. We had a wonderful time painting and sharing worship in other creative ways with our children and people of all ages. We were led by Brian Edmiston and Laura Sobjack from N. Columbus Meeting in Ohio. They inspired us with their depth of listening and teaching us how to involve the children in sharing their spiritual experiences. We know we will do more exploration of this way of sharing across the ages.

The occupancy of the new Meeting House began an opportunity for regularly scheduled adult religious education. And what an opportunity it was. It was the goal of the committee to use our internal resources to offer a variety of topics in order to reach different interests within the Meeting at large. Sessions included the topics of Walter Wink's book "Engaging the Powers"; an introduction to insight meditation; some exploration of Faith 'n Play; a discussion of building "green" and LEED certification; Whittier and Whitman poetry; a Quaker response to fundamentalism; and an introduction to the book "The Five Gospels." Many of these sessions became the catalyst for further discussion outside of scheduled time. All were well attended.

Red Cedar Friends continues to have an active Spiritual Formation Program with 16 friends participating this year under the care of Lake Erie Yearly Meeting. The May closing retreat will be hosted at our Meeting House. The meetings have been rich starting with the sharing of our spiritual biographies, and continuing with studying together selected books and readings. We also met in small groups of 4 or 5 to have extended sharing and support in our current spiritual disciplines and journeys.

We now have most of our Library on site in the beautifully designed shelves crafted by Friend David Castro, and installed in the room on the West side of our Worship Space. We had dreamed of this space as our Library and planned for it during construction. But it was truly exciting to actually move the 2400 books into the shelves and out of our librarians' home where they had been stored for about 10 years. Those years were not wasted though. Sally Lloyd and Stephanie Charlot worked to catalogue and organize our materials, and once Friends saw that the Library was being cared for, many people brought forward donations of more books. Stephanie will now take care of organizing and cataloging the Library and Sally will begin working on the Archives. A symbolic moment occurred on March 25, 2011 when Sally handed over the key to Stephanie.

Our librarians will continue our tradition this year of giving everyone involved in Religious Education a book in May. This year 42 books will be given to the children and 28 Pendle Hill Pamphlets to adult First Day School volunteers. We are so delighted to find our First Day program thriving and receiving generous support from our adults.

Membership and Outreach continued with their faithful attention to welcoming newcomers at the rise of Meeting each week. They have established a tradition of having a special potluck to welcome new attenders at least once a year and taking their pictures to put up to help us get to know them. They also contribute a number of services regularly that help our Meeting function well. They check telephone messages and email them to the appropriate person or committee. They regularly update our Meeting Directory, and offer a Member Record form to people active in the Meeting. Parents have available to them a form that registers their children as under the care of the Meeting. They keep our web site and advertising up to date.

On April 28, 2011 Membership and Outreach hosted a talk at the Meeting House by Maxine Kaufman Lacusta, a Jewish Quaker and author of *Refusing to Be Enemies: Palestinian and Israeli Nonviolent Resistance to Israeli Occupation*.

This year M&O offered a Worship Sharing session on membership and recorded membership. Friends who attended had an opportunity to share their own journey to membership with those who were thinking about membership. This led soon after to three new applications for membership. We welcomed Karen Okeafor Hooker and Heather Paris as recorded members this year. This year we had 71 active adult participants in our meeting and approximately 50 students in First Day School.

Meeting for Worship with Attention to Healing continued monthly on the third Monday, as it has since 1994. Concerns for healing and wholeness are gathered and worship remains deep and centered under the guidance of various clerks.

Peace and Social Justice worked hard to involve the whole Meeting in the composition of a minute on Immigration and it was approved in October of 2010. They sponsored a Habit Holiday again this year in October to encourage us all to contemplate our habits and if they help us on our spiritual path. We examined the FCNL priorities in April to help guide their efforts for us at the national level. In June of 2010, the Committee offered a slate of organizations to which to make our annual donations and the following groups were approved: the Harriette McAdoo Scholarship Endowment Fund; Quaker House; Friends for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgendered, and Queer Concerns; the Michigan Peace Team; AFSC, and FCNL. Many smaller monthly donations were made to a wide variety of organizations.

Red Cedar Friends Meeting is the state coordinator for American Friends Service Committee of the Eyes Wide Open Michigan Memorial and Cost of War Banners Exhibit. The EWO was on display at Western Michigan University for 3 days in March 2011 hosted by the Kalamazoo Peace Center. The cost of War Banners Exhibit was displayed two different times in March, once at the Michigan Forum and at another event at Central Methodist Church.

On November 14, 2010 twenty-five people at Red Cedar Friends Meeting participated in the Michigan Eyes Wide Open Time of Reflection and Caring: a Memorial to the Human Costs of War. The day was overcast with intermittent rain and very windy. We were grateful to be able to bring the exhibit inside the Meeting House. We spent the afternoon caring for the boots and shoes representing all the lives lost in Afghanistan and Iraq, both civilians and soldiers. We reflected on the human costs of war and worshipped together with friends and peace partners. We also considered the Meeting's ongoing commitment to coordinating this state project for the American Friends Service Committee. The day was meaningful to all who participated. We encourage other Meetings and faith communities to consider a similar format, with reflection on and caring for the Eyes Wide Open Exhibit.

Many members of Meeting including Margaret Nielsen, Becky Payne, Erick Williams, Paul Pratt, Melissa Osborn and Steve Osborn participated in the interfaith Michigan Peace Budget Coalition's effort to bring together a Michigan Forum on Jobs and Human needs on March 5, 2011. Ruth Flower from FCNL and Jo Comerford from

National Priorities Project discussed federal budget trade-offs, and budgetary dangers of military spending. Michigan speakers and panelists discussed overwhelming concerns with jobs and with meeting human needs in Michigan. More than 120 people attended.

During the year, Worship and Pastoral Care was present to Friends as we were stretched by both the joys and challenges of our first year together in the new Meeting House. Early in the year, we authored a memorial minute, which was published in Friends Journal in January of 2011, celebrating the life of Friend Harriette McAdoo who had died unexpectedly in late December 2009.

Our increased visibility in the community has led to the delight of receiving many new attenders. We also began receiving more requests for financial support from individuals in the community who have not connected with Meeting. After research, we began referring such requests to Christian Services.

The new life and activity generated by movement into our new home encouraged us to reprint "An Advice Regarding Offering & Receiving Ministry in Friends Worship", which had initially been published by WPC in 2004. We also began to update a small bookmark offering "Simple Guidelines to Quaker Worship", and began development of a brochure that will outline the variety of support available through the Meeting, ranging from Clearness Committees to assistance for members and attenders from the Sufferings Fund. We began a Peer Group for Friends who are called to ministry or service, which meets monthly.

We continued to provide clearness and support committees and welcomed those who had problems to talk with us. Our duties included continuance of a meeting welcoming to all, and we served as greeters each week for the 10:30 Meeting for Worship. Our concern for the quality of worship involved clerking the 9 a.m. Meeting for Worship, and working with the Clerk to encourage a depth of Quaker worship at both Meetings.

As we learned to live as a community in our new home, we also faced some growing pains. A joint meeting with the young Friends and committee representatives developed guidelines for after Meeting use of the worship space by physically active Friends.

We also grappled with a very difficult issue- the concern brought forward by a number of Friends about health problems they were experiencing at the Meeting House. Some Friends told us they became ill when they attended Meeting for Worship and other events because of our uses of products that contained irritants. We wanted to be fully welcoming to Friends and guests who might wear fragrances, but realized it was important to deal with this issue. We formed an Ad Hoc Fragrance Committee and they brought to Meeting for Business, in December of 2010, some specific suggestions to cope with the problem. Something that we all agreed upon easily was educating Friends about the issue with signs, bookmarks and information about fragrance free products that are readily available in our community. The Committee also suggested we give over one section of the Worship Room to fragrance free seating and indicate its purpose with small signs placed on the chairs. This suggestion was approved by Meeting for Business at the December Meeting, but when we discovered that there were Friends who were not comfortable with the idea we held it over for seasoning. At the April Meeting for Business, the Meeting did approve the following minute:

Meeting agreed to experiment over the summer with putting signs on chairs in one section of the worship room saying, "People with chemical sensitivities and their companions sit here. Please sit elsewhere if you are wearing fragrance today." Meeting agreed to revisit the issue in the fall.

There were people who wished to be recorded as standing aside on the issue, and we committed to revisiting the decision in the fall.

On April 20, 2011 a Tri-County Environmental Leadership Award was presented to Red Cedar Friends in relation to our effort to make a small footprint environmentally with our new Meeting House. Our LEED committee has submitted our application and we hope to receive certification soon. We will continue our mission by offering environmental education to interested parties. We continue to maintain our Due Care Plan. Our main responsibilities, now that we are in the building, will be to ensure that anyone doing landscaping on the property is aware of known spots of contamination and takes precautions against dermal exposure. In the front of the property there is a light screen barrier between potentially contaminated subsoil and clean topsoil. In the back of the property there is grass seed over several inches of clean topsoil, but gardeners and workers should wear gloves. We also have a map posted in the Meeting House that shows areas with known concentrations of lead and arsenic to be avoided.

Red Cedar Friends participate actively in local peace and justice organizations. Becky Payne represents RCF on the Peace Education Center Board of Directors. Bethany Styer is liaison for RCF on the newly organized Ingham Immigration Coalition, and attended a series of study groups on immigration as a representative for RCF. Ann Francis, Margaret Nielsen, Jack Smith and Erick Williams continue to be active with the Greater Lansing Network Against War and Injustice. Melissa Hasbrook and Sandra Cade organized The Connection Between

Militarism and Violence Against Women, November 25 to December 10, 2011 in relation to the 16 Days Campaign events that happened internationally. This program helped bring awareness of gender violence through art and poetry, and encouraged folks to share their stories. Steve Osborn helped organize World Friendship Day at People's church in February of 2011. April Allison participates in the FGC Traveling Ministries Program as a companion and elder when meetings request a ministry visit.

Red Cedar Friends also serve in many wider Quaker organizations. Ann Francis serves as a member of the Corporation of the American Friends Service Committee, board member and member of the AFSC Board Executive Committee. She is co-clerk of the AFSC Great Lakes Region Executive Committee. Joann Neuroth serves as a member of the AFSC Corporation. She represents Lake Erie Yearly Meeting at the AFSC Corporation Meeting. Susan Waltz served on the AFSC Working Group on Board Role and Size in 2010-2011. This working group made recommendations to the Corporation for AFSC Board reduction in size and Board composition which were approved at the March 2011 Corporation Meeting. Julia Bell is the RCF liaison with FCNL. Dianne Guenin-Lelle is Clerk and Stephanie Charlot is Recording Clerk of Green Pastures Quarterly Meeting. Merry Stanford and Peter Wood are active as leaders in the Friends General Conference Couple Enrichment Program.

As we settle into our new Meeting House we seem to be addressing with an increased seriousness our identity as Quakers and how we want to witness our Testimonies. There have been times when we have found ourselves impatient or angry, misunderstood or attacked when we have tried to express ourselves. We want Red Cedar Friends to be a community where we feel safe to share our thoughts and feelings. Let us hold each other in the Light as we continue to have an abundance of energy and commitment to creating the loving community of Red Cedar Friends, and working for Good Order in the wider world community.