

STATE OF THE MEETING

June 2012

Greetings to Friends throughout the Lake Erie Yearly Meeting:

Red Cedar Monthly Meeting continues to be an active, challenged, inspired and, sometimes frustrated community of seekers.

Community Building

Red Cedar is, above all, a community of seekers from a variety of traditions who hunger for openness to listening to Spirit. There is abundant opportunity to be together to build relationships and share our experiences as seekers; Friendly 8's, Couples Enrichment, a quilting group, opportunities to practice Soul Collage, and Spiritual Formation are but a few ways Friends share time and use the Meeting House outside of First Day worship. In the process we notice an integration of new and old members. We are exploring Quaker Quest as a way to deepen our shared community and to consider being more visible in the wider world.

Over ten years ago we followed a leading to find a home of our own. We used the metaphor of a couple moving from being engaged to being married for this community commitment. As we start our third year of occupancy we report the marriage remains strong despite facing some difficult and trying issues.

Our beautiful worship room is a simple and unmarked space wide open for God's presence. We are experimenting with the establishment of a separate seating area during Worship for members of our community with chemical sensitivities. We have slowed our discernment to allow space to listen carefully to everyone's concerns, notice the importance of maintaining relationships in the face of widely divergent needs and, in the process, stay connected to the blessed community. It takes both generosity and forgiveness for each other to seek this unity. Yet, difficult experiences strengthen marriages.

Although one person formally resigned her membership, we have welcomed new recorded members Karen Hooker and Heather Paris (in 2010–2011) and Gretchen Morse and Lynette Biery (in 2011–2012). Friends note our long history of including LGBTQ folks in the life of the Meeting.

Young Friends

Our children are a wonderful presence at Red Cedar. Recently thirty-two Young Friends received books at our annual book-giving event. Our commitment to supporting young friends at Friends General Conference Annual Summer Gathering and other Quaker gatherings continues. Childcare is provided for most events, and members are helping each other with childcare. The number of adults working with our four first day classes has increased, encouraging intergenerational friendships. Members look forward to hearing Young Friends report on activities each first day – making a video for a Quaker YouTube contest, studying the ecosystem surrounding the Meeting House, discussing AFSC initiatives, bible study, and listing the questions we have about God.

Adult Education

Twice a month the Adult Religious Education Committee hosts an hour before Meeting for Worship For Adult First Day. The programs range from bible study, to social justice issues, to worship, to famous Quakers to articles in Friends Journal. Those members leading the hour give others a glimpse into their individual interests and inner lives. Many Friends look forward to

attending these sessions. This has become yet another path to building community by getting to know one another.

In February the ARE committee members designed and delivered a “home grown” day-long retreat on US Quaker History with a focus on equality. A section on early Quakers in Michigan gave us a peek into local history that is rarely discussed in wider Quaker circles.

On April’s Earth Day a unofficial group of Friends interested in earth care organized an activity during potluck where Friends examined what personal habits they could change to honor our commitment to Stewardship.

Building

We are entering the third year of occupancy of our Meeting House. As we had hoped members claim ownership of the building. We are comfortable in our space. Many, many of us know how to open the building. On a recent spring weekend we found volunteers working on the landscape, installing the bike racks we obtained through a city grant, cleaning the meetinghouse, washing windows, spring-cleaning the interior. These volunteers, both adults and children, use these routine chores as another way to build an intergenerational community and settle into our shared space. Together we installed the Peace Pole, a gift from Edgewood United Church of Christ, our former landlord. We are working on signage for our front yard, and ready to install sound panels in the Social Hall. Our kitchen – phase 1 – is finished. It can be used to cook meals and clean up for our own gatherings. It is well organized with signs that allow anyone to find a tool and systems that support moving supplies in and out of the kitchen and dining room. Many Friends have learned how to run the dishwasher/sterilizer.

The commitment to sweat equity in building and now maintaining our meetinghouse is grounded in the professional skills of a long-time Friend - our guide to carpentry, finishing and installation of all things. Recently he offered his gifts to finish our beautiful library installing custom bookshelves and file drawers.

We offer the meetinghouse for wider community service and enrichment. We serve as the distribution site for the Old Town Commercial Association’s Compassionate Feast, which provides the ingredients for a full Thanksgiving meal to neighbors who otherwise might not have that available. We also host the Renegade Theater, a grassroots innovative event for theater lovers.

Our rental agreement with the Ingham County Health Department’s diversity training continues. We expect requests to rent our building to increase after we install the sound panels in the Social Hall.

The Meetinghouse will be featured on the new Red Cedar Friends website, which is under construction.

Deepening Worship

Yet another way our Meeting has used the Meeting House is for more opportunities for Friends to worship. Since September, three to eight Friends gather each weekday morning at 7:30 for half-hour worship. Twice a month an average of four to six Friends gather on Wednesday evening for Insight Meditation. A Spiritual Formation group with some consistent and some changing members has met for over fifteen years. This year twelve members met monthly. Four friends have formed a peer group for those called to Ministry or Service. And, our monthly Meeting for Healing continues into its twenty-first year.

Recently Red Cedar hosted faculty from School of the Spirit for a one-day workshop - Testing the Waters. Three Friends have submitted their application for the two-year School of the Spirit program.

Active in the Wider Quaker World

Red Cedar members continue to be active in wider Quaker organizations. A member represents the AFSC Midwest Regional Committee on the National Board. A number of Friends offer workshops and other service at the annual summer Gathering of Friends General Conference (FGC). Another Friend is the clerk of the FGC Visioning Committee. Yet another is clerk of FGC Development Committee. Others serve on FGC Central Committee.

Red Cedar Friends are active in the Traveling Ministries program and are leaders in the Couples Enrichment program. Red Cedar continues to care for the Michigan Eyes Wide Open exhibit.

We move forward with the intent to continue following God's leadings in our lives, our support of one another and our work in the wider world community.