

State of the Meeting Report June 2015

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Fourteenth Day, Sixth Month, 2015

The Spiritual Condition of our Blessed Community

The Red Cedar Friends Monthly Meeting (RCF) community is thankful for our individual and communal spiritual journeys. We have made it a priority to offer support and guidance at both levels, and we began the year looking forward to completing a series of retreats on leadings and discernment. As a Meeting, we have begun an earnest exploration of our call to communal witness. We have been mindful of the year's stark political and social news, filled with glaring inequalities and racism, and in the fall we were confronted with a makeshift homeless structure bordering our property and visible from our worship room. We have put to ourselves the query, "How are we led to respond to conditions around us, as individuals and as a community? How does our outreach seed our spiritual lives and the spiritual condition of our community?" Moving into the future, we will continue to engage with these questions.

The Meeting for Worship with Attention to Healing celebrated 20 years of regular, third Monday gatherings. We are grateful for this deep and enduring gift to our community.

Throughout the year, RCF is lifted by the cordial and hard working individuals who make up our clearness, support, and anchoring committees.

Learning in our Blessed Community

Our First Day School attenders have enjoyed a program constructed around the queries "Who am I?" and "Who are we?" This included exercises in support of self-understanding and interviews of adult members of the community. Intergenerational worship with skilled anchors and with the larger community offered experience of connecting with the Inner Teacher. Intergenerational community fun days extended beyond First Day to offer board games, active circle games, musical chairs and pizza.

Three retreats introduced and deepened the community's experience with listening skills based on the Couples Enrichment dialogue process, in preparation for moving toward a communal witness. In support of this, our twice-monthly Adult Religious Education sessions used a format of presentation followed by worship sharing, or, for matters of great concern, query-directed worship sharing alone. The topics were rich and diverse, including Contemplative Prayer, Orientation to Quakerism, Sharing Spiritual Journeys, The Gospel of John, Experiences on the El Camino de Santiago, Introduction to School of the Spirit, and worship sharing with queries on Racial and Economic Injustice.

Four RCF members received minutes of completion from the School of the Spirit On Being a Spiritual Nurturer program. RCF is honored by their dedication and personal journeys. The meeting has already begun to experience the fruits of their spiritual growth as they bring this experience into their work in our community.

Service in our Blessed Community

A Spirit-led public witness since 2004, Eyes Wide Open communicates the human cost of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. A display of civilian shoes and military boots bearing the names and ages of individual deaths – each one representing many – brings home the enormity of the loss. RCF coordinates the Michigan Eyes Wide Open exhibit for the American Friends Service Committee. In 2014 the EWO exhibit was reduced in size to make it more portable and easier to store – retaining individual mementos and remembrances, but reducing the numbers of symbolic boots and shoes. In many ways the decision to downsize while retaining the prominence of the

message was not an easy one, and in January we joined with nearby Quaker meetings, peace churches, other faith communities, peace and justice organizations and concerned individuals to host an exhibit and time of reflection in our Meetinghouse. A community program "Together We Reflect; Together We Carry On" was offered, and well-attended.

Red Cedar Friends joined an amicus brief for a Supreme Court case on same-sex marriage. Richmond Friends Meeting prepared the legal brief and asked Red Cedar Friends Meeting (a meeting within the jurisdiction of the Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals) to join it. RCF formally embraced same-sex marriage under the care of the Meeting in the Summer of 1989.

RCF members and attenders continue important work with groups and organizations advocating for social justice, as well as organizations doing good works. Examples include the Action of Greater Lansing, American Civil Liberties Union, American Friends Service Committee, Amnesty International, Friends Committee on National Legislation, Friends General Conference, Greater Lansing Network Against War & Injustice, Green Pastures Quarterly Meeting, Lake Erie Yearly Meeting, Michigan Disability Rights Coalition, Michigan League for Public Policy, Mid-Michigan Immigration Coalition, and the Peace Education Center. Friends also volunteer with local groups providing services or shelter, such as Loaves & Fishes and Meals on Wheels.

RCF has actively engaged in a process of discernment to identify a communal witness. Retreats and a threshing session have sought to deepen and broaden the network of relationships that is our Meeting and to build toward a communal witness. Here "communal witness" conveys a shared, community concern that can be taken up by all that are able. We strive for discernment through an open and inclusive process, including structured dialogues, reflective listening, worship sharing, and seeking unity. We do not wish to dither, but to be proactive in work to release racial tension, eliminate violence, and enhance accountability.

As RCF works toward these ends, we seek to expand our support and interactions with local groups engaged in peace and justice advocacy. The Peace & Social Justice committee, among other efforts, is working with a local coalition of congregations and community organizations that work together to address social justice concerns.

A Home for our Blessed Community

At home, we are planning a garden on our property as one means to memorialize deceased members of the Red Cedar Friends Community.

RCF was pleased to host Green Pastures Quarterly Meeting's winter gathering at our meetinghouse this year. The weekend event brought the world of sound and its connections to spirituality to us with joy and good fellowship.

RCF members and attenders have held our community in love and mutual respect. We have been good stewards of our finances, building and grounds, and outreach. From the first committee meeting of the year to the last dish washed, active minds, hearts, and hands nurture our community. Our attention to worship, learning, committees, and fellowship guide us. Our membership grows. We are blessed.