

FIELD SECRETARY'S REPORT TO CONTINUING COMMITTEE

OCTOBER 27, 2012

Where has the time gone since Annual Sessions? During the last four months, I have continued to visit and learn. I have continued to be welcomed by meetings, members; and attenders. I have been particularly impressed by the strengths of the meetings I have worshipped with and visited. I continue to be invited to visit again, which makes my heart glad.

I continue what I believe is my primary work—listening for what members and attenders identify as their Meetings' needs, and how I, as field secretary, can be of service. I continue to develop programs and workshops as I listen to identified needs and hopes of those I meet. I have been contacted by Friends from various meetings with questions and requests for information about resources, and I have continued to offer resources, information and pastoral care as need and opportunity have arisen. I continue to work on my goal that programs and resources I develop will help to bring individuals of different Meetings together.

At Annual Sessions, I reported on my sense that, as Meetings and as individual Friends, we have many challenges. We deal with questions and concerns around conflict, lack of participation, lack of vocal ministry, sometimes a sense of divide between young Friends and older Friends, the illness and loss of many of our Elders, and a sense of disconnection between our lives as Friends and our Meetings and our faith in our Quaker tradition. What I continue to find in my visiting and travels, and in my email conversations, reflects strong Meetings and positive and committed Friends.

I continue to experience the sense of a strong desire for Friends to find ways back to a traditional core, to being community, to experience worship together, to have fun together, to come closer to one another as F/friends.

As I stated in my report to Annual Sessions, Quaker openness and work in areas of non-violence, peace and justice, commitment to education, and commitment to sustainability, to name just a few, are ideas that are attractive and mightily needed in our world. I asked those gathered – and myself:

- How do we tap into those strengths of our Quaker tradition that are attractive to others in order to energize ourselves and make ourselves and our Meetings stronger?
- How can we grow in connection and community?

During the last four months I have continued to read, reflect, and to work on how I, as field secretary and Friend, can be an active and energizing agent for ILYM and for our meetings.

Programs

I prepared and presented a program entitled, "Discernment and Decision-Making in the Manner of Friends," for the Evanston meeting for learning on October 7th. Fifteen people attended. There was good discussion around the history of Friends individual and corporate ways of discernment of call, openings, leadings and concerns, as well as the differences between discernment and decision making, and the use of clearness committees in both of these processes,

I prepared a two-part program on Spiritual Genograms for DGF. [The first of two workshops is to be presented on October 20th.]

(NOTE: As I write this report, on October 13th, the first workshop has not yet been held, so I cannot comment on the number of participants, or the success of the program. For me, nevertheless, working on the program with DG Friends and DG Worship and Counsel Committee, has been an opportunity to get to know the Meeting, the Committee, and individuals better. For me, it is already and unqualified success!)

The second workshop is scheduled for November 10th. This program is based on one that has been successfully used by churches to forge individual connections and build community. In the workshop, participants work on their own spiritual genograms and have opportunities to share their own stories, if they choose, and to listen to others' stories. This sharing provides a vehicle for discussion of the different spiritual/religious tradition backgrounds of our members and how that diversity impacts what we separately may expect from worship and from the Meeting.

Eventually I hope to present a version of this workshop that would provide an opportunity for meetings to remember, trace and learn the spiritual history of their Meeting, through identifying and naming those who have been the spiritual leaders of the Meeting as well as how individual members' spiritual journeys have shaped the Meeting. The goal of both of these programs is to help Friends move to a better understanding of one another's points of view (particularly those that come from our pasts), and help forge stronger and closer connections between us.

Programs Scheduled

On October 28th I will be travelling with Beth Schobernd to the Macomb Worship Group. I will be presenting a program for members of MWG in the early afternoon on MfW and a program for the community ("What is Quakerism?") later in the afternoon. (NOTE: Once again, I do not know about the "success" of these programs. I trust in the movement of the spirit, nevertheless. My opportunities to work with Erin Taylor and others from Macomb have been a delight! If "success" can be measured by my own learning, these programs have been wildly "success"-full.)

Travel and Visits

In July I visited Urbana-Champaign Meeting, sang with them, was fed by their pot-luck and fellowship, and enjoyed getting to know more members/attenders from that Meeting. In July and August (as I completed my chaplain residency) I visited primarily by email and phone. (Often the only contribution I could make was to "lurk" in the background, learning what I could and holding in my heart, and in the light, the people and concerns about which I had read.)

In September, I attended the Corn Roast in McHenry, and spent a spirit-filled weekend with Alice and Bill Howenstein, I attended Upper Fox Valley Meeting, participated in meeting for learning, meeting for worship, and meeting for worship with attention to business. Members and attenders shared with me what they saw as strengths of their meeting. I was impressed by their commitment to each other and to being active in the community. Alice and Bill also took me with them to visit Betty Tuft that afternoon.

In September, I also attended the M&A retreat, held in DG, and BRQM, held in DuBois, IL. Both of these weekends offered me an opportunity to connect with and get to know individuals from many ILYM meetings. BRQM afforded me another opportunity to meet and visit with Friends from the southern meetings, especially the St. Louis, Columbia, and Southern Illinois meetings. (Southern Illinois has a very large contingent of Friends I had never met before.)

I visited DGFM on the weekend of the M&A retreat, discussed an outreach idea involving a radio ad on NPR's BEZ with Tom Fairbank, had a short meeting with Dave Davis, clerk of DG's M&C, and visited with Friends visiting or sojourning at DG.

September brought the death of my younger brother, David, two days after BRQM. My report must include my gratitude for the loving care and support of so many YM Friends who held me and my family in the light, and who continue to do so.

October includes visits to Evanston, Downers Grove, and Clear Creek.

Scheduled Future Visits

October 28th – Macomb Worship Group

November 3rd – Chicago Friends Gathering (MCGM) program at DG

November 10th – second Spiritual Genogram workshop at DG

November 18th – Lake Forest Meeting and Oshkosh Meeting (with JDomanik)

December 1st-2nd—St Louis Meeting

December 16th—Spoon River and Macomb (with JDomanik)

January 6th, 2013—Rock Valley (with JDomanik)

As I write this for publication on October 13th, I continue to love my work as field secretary, and to feel blessed by all those I meet and all I am learning.

Respectfully submitted,
Judy Wolicki, Field Secretary