

Reno Friends Monthly Meeting--2008 State of the Meeting Report (Draft 2/22/09)

During 2008 Reno Monthly Meeting took an introspective look at itself as a Friends community, and became more open and accepting of a wide range of beliefs as a result. This was a pro-active shift, which occurred partly as a result of new people with varied views getting significantly involved with our Meeting, and partly as a result of two worship sharings that opened us to this shift. For the first, Elizabeth Boardman came and led us to consider “What is it about Reno Friends Meeting that keeps us coming back?” For the second, we recreated the “diversity” activity and worship sharing that took place during the Spring Quarterly Meeting at Ben Lomond. These worship sharings deepened our Meeting’s experience of itself as a community of individuals who are not the same and therefore have much to contribute to each other’s lives and spiritual development.

Our potluck/book group was still going strong at the close of 2008. This monthly social occasion has led to the cultivation of friendships among some of those involved and provided a forum for thoughtful, sensitive sharing—even mutual questioning--of aspects of our spiritual journeys. The energy and comradery generated by the book group have inspired people to become more involved in our Meeting, and additional venues for sharing together are also in the works for 2009 as a result.

By 2008 it became clear that Meeting for Worship attendance has increased steadily over the past few years—from 9-10 people to 15-20 or more on average. Silent meetings are still common, but vocal ministry occurs more than before. Meeting for Business attendance sometimes tops 15, also; 5-8 is more typical. There is a growing sense that perhaps our Meeting is beginning to “gather”...although we are unsure what exactly that means!

As a Meeting we tried in 2008 to connect with the wider Quaker community. In addition to Elizabeth Boardman’s visit, Eric Moon also came to spend a weekend with us to share on various topics related to Friends. Our Meeting supported those who wanted to make the treks to several Quarterly Meetings and PacYM by reimbursing those who travelled together for transportation costs.

In response to the ongoing challenge of trying to fill more of the offices and committee posts, we sought creative ways to invite participation—to accomplish mundane tasks and greater administrative and leadership responsibilities. For example, in the Nominating process we whittled down some larger roles into more manageable slices of the pie: Instead of one person taking over the traditional role of clerk, we divided “worship clerk” duties among five people; three individuals rotate Recording Clerk duties; etc.. This approach is an experiment for us. So far, it seems to have generated some positive energy for these and other tasks—and we hope less people feel overburdened. Additionally, after being laid down several years ago, the Peace and Social Concerns and Ministry committees were brought back for 2009.

Amidst this year of self-discovery it has come forward that our Meeting lacks experience with individual or corporate leadings of the Spirit. Many are interested but unsure how to open to guidance by the Inner Light/God/Spirit. We suspect this process could be facilitated by learning “gospel order” more thoroughly and committing ourselves to functioning in that manner. In general we are interested in learning about how to do this, but there is also a long-standing tendency among us to experience some impatience with Quaker processes. This and our high percentage of persons new to Friends make the spiritual discipline offered by Quaker process a real challenge we hope to learn to address.

Our Meeting maintained its commitment to First Day School by continuing to pay two teachers stipends for their planning and Sunday morning time commitments—one teaches children ages six and under, the other teaches those seven and above. While this approach definitely allows us to better meet our children’s needs, in some ways it has also allowed us to think of First Day School as “taken care of” each week, thus permitting a continued lack of Meeting-wide engagement in First Day School and in our Meeting’s children. Over time, we hope to include this challenge in our ongoing process of self-discovery, introspection, and conscious growth as a Meeting community.

Appendix:

List of 2008 Reno Friends Monthly Meeting activities:

--New carpet was installed in the Meeting house as a partial result of a donation from the St. Mary's Hospital hospice program, which held meetings and trainings in our Meeting house during 2008.

--A wall display of local art in our Meeting house was initiated during 2008 by our Hospitality/Aesthetics committee.

--An initial discussion of immigration was held; however, as yet there has been no real follow-up. Our Meeting is interested in finding out what other Monthly Meetings are doing regarding related issues.

--Although we miss several long-standing, well-loved members who relocated to other cities (and countries!) in 2008, we have also celebrated the addition of six new members and several new attendees.