

FIELD SECRETARY'S REPORT TO CONTINUING COMMITTEE

MARCH 9, 2013

I continue to feel welcomed and blessed in this work!

As I visit meetings, I ask members and attenders to identify what they believe are the strengths of their meetings, and am gratified to hear these enumerated, especially when I hear that my question encouraged them to think about their meeting from this positive perspective.

Meetings identified their "people" strengths:

- Awesome, individualistic, creative, caring people, who work together, listen to one another, "hang in there," who can be revolutionary, who have a sense of community – are connected to each other – and to the larger community
- People who rise to the task when needed
- Good clerk who keeps us on task, calling us back to silence
- Individuals who act as "conduits" between Meeting and Friends who can't come to be with group -- keeping them connected to one another
- People who encourage each other, and who reach out to the wider community
- Individuals who lead by example
- People who are willing to use individual skills for the good of Meeting and wider community and world, who can put together their individual interests with Meeting needs
- Older, experienced, wise individuals
- Children
- Elders
- Clerks who are organized and understand Quaker process
- People they meet in committees, leadership training, spiritual friendship groups

They identified strengths in the Quaker ways of worship:

- Meeting for Worship
- Business Meeting – a good opportunity to get to know one another
- First Day School
- Meetings for Remembrance
- Meetings for Healing
- Silence
- Vocal ministry

And they identified strengths of heart and mind:

- Dedication
- Loyalty
- Willingness to continue to learn
- [FS: Though they did not mention it, my experience of Friends (in spite of what some of us may have heard) is that they have the strength another strength: A SENSE OF HUMOR, and a willingness to see the fun / the joy /the LIGHT in the world.]

My primary work—listening for what members and attenders identify as their own and their Meetings' needs, and how I, as field secretary, can be of service—also continues. In the past four months, Friends have given me opportunities to present programs, to find and offer resources, and to support and mentor. They have also offered me their kindness, their guidance, their eldering and their mentoring.

Though we call them “elders”, I continue to believe that the ministry of eldering is not confined to the elderly. It is a gift I have encountered in young and old as I do this work. And I continue to seek ways to nurture that gift for the good of the YM, our MMs and the broader community.

Programs

I offered a two-part program on Spiritual Genograms for DGFM, which was present in October and November. Though only 8 people attended, those who did said that it helped them to get to know one another better, one of the program's primary goals. I used a modified version of the program when I visited Rock Valley meeting in March. This small meeting (4 members) spoke about their spiritual backgrounds prior to MfW. Though they have been together for years, they said they learned things they had never heard before about one another.

Beth Schobernd and I offered two programs for the Macomb Worship Group on October 28. The first was a program for MWG members, which covered questions they had, and focused on Vocal Ministry. The second program was for the wider community. MWG had advertised it in the community in the hope that it would attract those interested in Quakers. All the members of MWG attended both programs. In addition, two or three people from the Unitarian Universalist church, where MWG meets, attended the second program. Although MWG was disappointed that more people from the wider community did not attend, they said that they felt the programs were helpful to them, and answered many of their questions. Members of MWG have since told me that the information on vocal ministry reduced their anxiety about it and has since allowed members to offer vocal ministry. When I attended their meeting on February 10th of this year, there were two messages, one of them given by one of the Group's older children.

Programs Scheduled

Although no definite dates have been set as yet, I have been invited by several meetings to offer programs on Marriage, on Clearness Committees, and on Pastoral Care. These are in the works.

Travel and Visits

Once again, I have tried to attend gatherings that would allow me to meet folks from more than one meeting at a time. I attended the Chicago Friends Gatherings (MCGM) in November and February. I attended Lake Forest Meeting's annual Thanksgiving gathering, and got to visit with members and attenders from Upper Fox Valley Meeting as well as Lake Forest Meeting.

At the end of November, I visited with St. Louis Meeting, where I was treated to an opportunity to attend their monthly Saturday Clerks' Meeting. A lively discussion of the SLFM's strengths and needs in the morning was followed by an opportunity to have lunch and more discussion with their Clerk and others. I attended MfW on December 1st, and was

invited to attend the Ministry committee meeting after celebrating December birthdays and sharing in potluck. I was very impressed with the commitment of SLFM's members to outreach in the community and in the world.

Other visits in December and January included DGFM and 57th Street, my own meeting. Though I did not travel much beyond Downers Grove and Hyde Park in December, I kept in contact with YM members by phone and email. In January, I had a number of phone and email conversations with members from OPFM, Rock Valley FM, Spoon River QM, Bloomington-Normal FM and Macomb Worship Group. I offered resources and support, and scheduled visits for February.

January 17-20 I was at Pendle Hill, attending Friends General Council's New Meetings Project consultation. It was a wonderful opportunity to meet and have deep conversations with members from 15 yearly meetings. While in Pennsylvania, I also had an opportunity to visit both FGC's and PH's bookstores, from which I had sent and brought back a number of pamphlets and books that will provide resources to YM members and MMs.

In February I visited Rock Valley FM for their Meeting for Reading, MfW and a two-and-a-half-hour potluck, at which they talked about their strengths and needs, as well as RVFM's history. This small meeting has four members, and meets on the second first day of each month. I hope to be able to find ways to support this small meeting during the next few months. I'd like to be able to connect them with individuals from another meeting, possibly another small meeting.

Janice Domanik and I visited Spoon River QM, and Macomb Worship Group February 9-11.

Scheduled Future Visits

The calendar is filling up with YM opportunities: Blue River Quarterly, Women's Weekend, Work Weekend. Soon it will be time for Site Prep for Annual Sessions. In addition, I'll be attending the M&A Spring Meeting in April. Nevertheless, I plan to try to visit Oshkosh, South Bend, and the new worship group in Elkhart, as well as Springfield, Carbondale, Columbia and Rolla. (I've always wished to be able to bi-locate.)

As I write this third report, I want to repeat what I have said before: I love my work as field secretary, and feel blessed by all those I meet and all I am learning. My thanks to YM members for the ways you nurture and guide me in this work.

Respectfully submitted,
Judy Wolicki, Field Secretary