

## Fall 2010 Field Secretary Report

Interestingly, I have been mostly to non-Illinois meetings since the annual sessions last June – South Bend and Duneland in Indiana, Oshkosh, Wisconsin, and Columbia and St. Louis, Missouri, as well as Southern Illinois, Lake Forest and Blue River Quarterly Meetings here in Illinois. But, the highlight of my work has been working with Friends World Committee for Consultation.

In early August, I wrote: “There has been a fair amount of work on trying to arrange for “Salt & Light” (the FWCC mini-regional events) presentations in October and November. The work is frustrating in many of the ways that planning things with Friends is always frustrating, but it seems that trying to get commitments in the summer for something taking place in the fall is nearly impossible. In this case, it is particularly difficult because we are trying to have multiple events in multiple locations on successive days. Unfortunately, FWCC needs to buy plane tickets and arrange schedules. I think that the logistics of local housing and transportation will be relatively easy once we have firm sites and dates. My other concern is that the FWCC staff believe that these events will pay for themselves (including trans-Atlantic plane fares). I am very doubtful that enough income can be generated. If we charge enough to cover costs, no one will come. At the moment, I am concerning myself with dates and sites – money comes later.”

A month later, I added, “You will notice that I have continued to put in time on planning, scheduling, and coordinating work on the FWCC Salt & Light presentations in October. At this moment, the outcome is uncertain, but I remain hopeful. This process has reminded me, once again, that Friends (like others) are subject to enthusiasms, not always dependable, and occasionally passive aggressive. I should know all this, but I choose to be (and hope to remain) a slow learner.” Things went much better in September and we had the first three events last weekend in Columbia, St. Louis, and Southern Illinois Meetings. It is still too early to know if donations will cover costs, but my sense is that the events themselves have been well received by those in attendance. These have all been made by Felicity McCartney from Belfast, Northern Ireland and a member of Ireland Yearly Meeting, and Sheila Hoyer, the Christian Education Minister at First Friends, Greensboro (North Carolina Yearly Meeting – FUM).

In the days leading up to the first event last Friday, there were jitters in Philadelphia (and Indianapolis), but apparently none in Columbia. Despite changing the contact person several times, everything needful was taken care of in good time. Ten folks attended and were engaged in the presentations. One of FWCC’s objectives is to encourage contact across the branches of Friends. This was certainly the case – I suspect that few of those in attendance knew that Sheila came to Friends among the evangelicals in Northwest Yearly Meeting and is currently a part of the paid ministerial team at Greensboro First Friends.

The next day, the FWCC road show moved to St. Louis for a full-day presentation. Again, the eleven local Friends seemed to connect well with the speakers. The presentations covered the same material, but had time for greater detail and more time for small group activities. Perhaps one of the best aspects of the day was an unintentional side effect. Two women who had not been to meeting for some time attended and indicated that they would be back. Most of those in attendance went to dinner together at a local restaurant, continuing the dialogue with Friends from very different circumstances.

Our peripatetic band traveled on to Carbondale on Sunday morning, arriving just in time for meeting for worship. The pace of the weekend was made obvious when soft couches lured one of our number to sleep. A shared lunch was followed by the FWCC presentations. Twelve adults and two children stayed – including one person from the local peace community. The presentations were again on the same material but were modified in response to the particular interests of those present.

Next weekend, Salt & Light events will continue with a new cast of characters. Anne Bennett, an English Friend who also served in Quaker House, Belfast and Rachel Stacy, a young adult Friend from Baltimore Yearly Meeting will be making presentations at Lake Forest and Downers Grove. Louise Salinas, The FWCC Section of the Americas Associate Secretary, will also be in attendance.