

Spiritual State of the Meeting Report, 1998

Approved by Meeting for Worship with a Concern for Business, March 7, 1999

The past year has presented several crucial issues in the life of our Meeting and has also been a period of expanded social sharing and community-building. We completed the process of becoming a full-fledged Preparative Meeting under the care of Sandy Spring Monthly Meeting. Eager as we were to move forward, the slow pace of Quaker deliberation allowed us to fully appreciate the significance of our request to formally organize as a Quaker community. Following our common leading, we did not wait for formalization to embrace the spiritual tasks necessary to building a spiritual community.

Activities that deepened our knowledge and appreciation of each other included a hayride, a summer picnic, "Friendly Bunches" gatherings and singing Christmas carols. We celebrated a wedding at Mt. Hebron House, celebrated the birth of two babies, formally welcomed two members and held a farewell for one family. Our outward witness was expressed through individual actions and by our preparation of AFSC kits. The monthly book discussion group continued meeting regularly. In June, Phyllis Keenan followed a leading and began holding monthly Meetings for Worship for Healing, with the support and approval of the Meeting. Several new attenders were drawn to our Meeting through this ministry.

Meeting for worship continued to regularly attract fifteen to twenty adult attenders. The Meeting was enriched throughout the year by visits from seekers and other Quakers, particularly from Sandy Spring Monthly Meeting. While we have found that the presence of visitors tended to enhance the quality of silent worship, we are aware that a significant number of visitors have not returned after an initial visit or two. First Day School continued to grow this year with the appointment of new teachers and an RE Committee. From 5 to 16 children attended First Day School weekly in three classes. The children enjoyed a spring egg hunt, presented an original Thanksgiving play, sang in an "Angel Chorus" at Christmas time and helped assemble AFSC kits. Young friendships began to bud.

In Meeting for Worship with a Concern for Business we struggled throughout the year with questions regarding the structure of this new Meeting: How many committees do we need? How will the work of the Meeting be accomplished? What is the rightful work of the Meeting? How can members and attenders continue to take personal responsibility for our common endeavors once a committee is appointed to attend to certain matters? Our progress on these issues was halting and slow, resulting in some painful misunderstandings, a deeper searching for unity and an increased sensitivity to one another.

We enter 1999 with quiet joy at any occasion where the phrase "Patapsco Friends Preparative Meeting" is uttered. Ahead of us lies the work of knitting ourselves more closely to the larger Quaker community and expressing a corporate Quaker witness to the world. Supporting our growing ministries and nurturing the Light Within each member and attender remain our constant aims.