

Red Cedar Friends Meeting State of the Meeting Report May, 2006

The tone of this year has been mostly one of growth and celebration, punctuated by some sadness at personal losses and the awareness that as a country, we are entering our fourth year of war-making in Iraq.

Between 5 and 12 attenders of Early Worship begin our First Day observance together at 9:30 on a typical week, and at mid-day worship we usually see more than 40 adult attenders (on one memorable occasion, we were 54) and a delightful gaggle of children. This spring, planners for our annual book-gifting to Meeting's children picked books for 26 young Friends among us. In addition, 8-10 Friends gather monthly to worship with attention to Healing, and 5-10 worship monthly with attention to Peace.

We considered together the Lake Erie queries that asked us to describe in this report on the nature and quality of our worship and the vocal ministry that nourishes it. Most of us find our spirits refreshed, deepened, centered and challenged in the holy silence built from expectant waiting; we come away less willing to judge, more open to transformation, more passionately committed to a Spirit-filled world, more joyfully committed to work we are led to undertake in that service and more able to let go of the guilt-driven impulse that urges us to do more than our leading. Collectively, we are more likely to err on the side of too little rather than too much vocal ministry, but a series of Spirit-led messages this spring challenged attenders in various ways to step forward more freely. Finding the grace to accept distractions and noises, messages that range from seemingly irrelevant to offensive, and dry spells as part of the miracle seems to us to be a welcome part of growth in our capacity to become a worshipping community. We are conscious that a spiritual challenge in the months ahead will be maintaining the primacy and richness of our spiritual community, both in worship and business as we manage the potentially overwhelming, exciting and controversial business of figuring out how to own property together and build a home of our own.

Toward that end, Red Cedar Friends purchased property in North Lansing in October, and our Building Committee is in process of contracting with an architect in hopes of moving through a building process in the next 18 months – the culmination of what seems like a very long search for a home of our own. At the Meeting for Business in which the committee reported the completed purchase, the recording clerk cheerfully and accurately recorded, “After a moment of silence, Friends whooped!” We are setting about the delightful process of getting to know our new neighbors, and holding each other tenderly as we begin the decision-making process about matching hopes and resources and settling on what we will be able to afford. In preparation for beefing up our financial capacity, we increased our budget by 15% and are pleased to see that Friends are contributing generously on track to meet it.

Nancy Lombardi, Ann Francis and Jim Bloomfield recorded their memberships during the year, and Barb Conley transferred hers from Baltimore area. We began, but

have not yet finished a complex and rich conversation about the meaning of membership, occasioned by a question of whether Red Cedar accepts dual membership. It is clear from our records that we have done so in the past, and we continue to discern together what our practice should be in the future. Friend Elise Harvey laid down her Red Cedar membership, and Marguerite Kern's husband Calvin passed away during the year.

New babies Roselyn Zimmerman, Calder Buehler and Grant Pennock swelled the ranks of our children. We delight in the challenge of structuring their religious education experiences. Intergenerational activities such as excursions to the corn maze and sledding hills are becoming traditions. In December our young people held a Meeting for Worship with attention to Business, agreeing among themselves about how to manage their exuberance during our post-meeting fellowship time, thus making their elders quite proud.

We hosted the Traveling Ministries Committee of FGC for a weekend committee meeting, and took advantage of the occasion to learn from them how they understand their ministry to Meetings. We availed ourselves of the services of one of their ministers, Mary Ann Downey of Atlanta Meeting to facilitate a spring retreat that was well attended.

Red Cedar Friends remain active outside of Meeting in many ways. Merry Stanford, April Allison and Richard Lee travel in ministry with FGC Traveling Ministries program, and Red Cedar support committees sustain and care for them in their work. High schooler Katy Nolan serves on FGC's Long Range Planning committee and helped host a Lake Erie teen retreat in Lansing this spring. Sally Lloyd's pottery and poetry was accepted as part of a Lansing art exhibit displaying work by survivors of domestic violence. And several Red Cedar Friends formed the planning committee which hosted February's Midwinter Gathering of Friends for Lesbian Gay Bisexual and Transgendered Concerns (FLGBTQC) in Fenton, Michigan. Ann Francis and Susan Waltz serve AFSC in regional and national leadership capacities.

Lansing peace activists continued regular peace vigils at the capital, witnessed for peace to Congressman Mike Rogers and commemorated the anniversary of the U.S. invasion of Iraq. Red Cedar united with Friends Council on National Legislation's STEP resolution urging withdrawal of troops from Iraq, and this spring Friend Ann Francis hand-carried letters on the subject to Senator Carl Levin to Washington D.C. We continue to work collaboratively with other faith communities and secular organizations as part of the Greater Lansing Network against War and Injustice (GLNAWI) and appreciate the Friends among us who lend their talents to helping lead that group's discernment and action.

We look forward to another year of growth together in 2006-07.

Joann Neuroth, Clerk

May 14, 2006