

Notes

Westport Monthly Meeting of Friends State of Society, 2000

In a break from the textual formats used in previous years and with a desire to create a working tool that we can use throughout the year ahead, we decided to simply ask Friends to comment in list form on areas that reflect the spiritual condition of Westport Friends Meeting. Over the coming year we intend to prayerfully hold up what has been stated, and not stated, as we attend to the ongoing spiritual needs of our meeting. The following is an overview prepared by M&C for Yearly Meeting.

Worship

We have high expectations, based on our experience of deep Worship together. As a result, we are keenly aware when we seem to miss the mark. Meeting for Business continues to illustrate the truth that bringing spiritual discipline to either Worship or Business is an ongoing challenge. Our experiment with singing before Meeting has been satisfying for a small but dedicated group of young and old – some who sing and some who listen. On balance, Intergenerational Worship is working for most. Some of our younger members wish for an opportunity to discuss the vocal ministry given in Worship during First Day School time.

Spiritual Growth and Nurture

There was a strong thread in all our voices for more opportunities to grow in spiritual community. First Day School, adult discussion groups, potlucks, Intergenerational Worship and holiday celebrations enrich us. There were requests for more of these gatherings and additional suggestions on expanding both hospitality and informal opportunities for fellowship.

We have met some of our pastoral care needs by addressing them after Worship each First Day. There is still concern about how we nurture those new to Quakerism and how we revitalize those who have become less active. How do we express our faith as a Meeting community? Are we careful in our choice of language and its various interpretations and assumptions? Are we listening for unmet needs for pastoral care among elders and less vocal members and attenders?

Outreach

We received a number of powerful expressions of the need for us to be more structured in the hospitality and orientation we offer to new members, attenders, and visitors. There is also a concern that we spread the word and the welcome outside our Meeting, especially to the area's university students. Our younger members say they have good relations with young people from other Meetings, yet desire more connection with youth of other religious traditions.

Witness and Service

There is a measure of concern over our lack of unified outreach as a Meeting. We ask, "Other than feeding the poor, what are our peace and social concerns? How are they identified? Is there more we can do, given our busy lives? Could we find a more unified approach through discussions or social get-togethers?" At the same time, many of our members and attenders are involved in social issues in their work or personal lives. Our Meeting has been called upon to support and nurture their witness. We need to explore how we witness corporately and at the same time support the work of individuals who may already feel stretched by their commitments. Meanwhile, our Peace and Social Concerns committee has recently regrouped and we hope this budding energy will continue.