

Evanston Monthly Meeting of Friends

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Evanston Friends Meeting
State of Society Report
December 2006

The Evanston Friends Meeting (EFM) is a thriving unprogrammed Quaker meeting located just north of the city of Chicago. EFM consists of 59 resident adult members, 21 resident associate members, 37 non-resident adult members and 33 non-resident associate members, for a total membership of 150. This number includes the seven new members who joined in 2006. Numerous attenders round out our worship and witness.

In the fourth quarter of 2005, renovation work was completed on the Evanston meetinghouse. By early 2006, the Meeting was once again settled and comfortable in its newly refurbished space. Beautiful in its simplicity, the space serves as a strong support to the many activities our energetic Meeting undertakes. While EFM has traditionally shared its meeting space with a local Buddhist group, we have now been able to reach out to a Mennonite group that is in transition and in need of long-term temporary meeting space. We are happy to be able to share God's blessings with our fellow peace church. EFM also began serving as host for the monthly meeting of Friends Gathering in Jesus Christ in December 2006.

The core of our Meeting's activities is our worship each First Day. We worship together for an hour. Before the final few minutes of worship, Ministry & Counsel invites prayer requests and messages that did not rise to the level of spoken ministry. This practice was initiated in late 2005, and we have found it to be a deep enhancement of our worship together.

Children are invited to attend at least the first 20 minutes of worship. Those who wish to may then attend First Day classes during the remaining 40 minutes of that hour. Our First Day School is thriving, with four classes held for children in preschooler/early elementary, mid-elementary, middle school and high school. We also offer childcare for those children who are not ready for worship or First Day School.

First Day classes have focused on Bible and Quaker stories for the younger students; Quaker testimonies for our middle group; and putting one's faith into action for our oldest group. To this end, the children presented a play entitled "Neglect a Fire and You Cannot Put It Out" on peaceful conflict resolution at the end of last year. This Christmas they presented a play written by one of our students about the famous World War I story of the British and German forces putting down arms and celebrating Christmas together.

In addition, the children undertook a service project to create a new children's library as a gift for our refurbished Meetinghouse.

The activities of the larger Meeting community are varied and dynamic. These include:

- ☞ Annual Inquirers' Group, a series of meetings each winter for those desiring to learn more about Quakerism
- ☞ Support of our Guatemalan Scholarships Program
- ☞ Movie Nights two Fridays each month
- ☞ A spiritually-focused book group
- ☞ Monthly spiritual development groups
- ☞ Monthly potluck lunch
- ☞ Monthly pancake breakfast
- ☞ Monthly simple meal, where participants donate the cost of a meal out to Right Sharing of World Resources
- ☞ Annual silent retreat to Lake Geneva each October
- ☞ Annual yard sale, which this year benefited Right Sharing of World Resources; Fresh Start (in conjunction with Fischer Memorial A.M.E. Zion Church), a local ministry for people recently released from prison; and Family Matters, a local after school center for children and their families. In addition, the Meeting children raised money at the yard sale by selling refreshments which they then used to purchase a goat for a family through Heifer International.
- ☞ Annual Thanksgiving potluck dinner

We also facilitate adult discussion/education through our Second Hour programs, immediately following worship and coffee. The most popular of these programs tend to be the presentation of spiritual journeys by Meeting members. Other Second Hour activities include worship sharing and discussion groups on various topics, presentations on special service work by Meeting members (this year we have had members travel to Rwanda and Burundi, among other locales), special presentations on the arts and an occasional presentation by religious education faculty on aspects of the Bible, Christianity and faith.

Special events this past year included the Meeting's hosting of a Sing Out for Peace concert in May 2006, and Play for Peace, an event sponsored by Lake Forest Friends Meeting but held at our Meetinghouse. We also conducted a wedding under the care of the Meeting in August, hosted a Youth Quake for teenage Quakers during the winter, and registered two conscientious objectors.

In addition, several Meeting members have organized the sale of fair trade items, such as coffee and olive oil. One member also sells War is Not the Answer yard signs to help facilitate our witness for a peaceful world. Finally, we sell Guatemalan crafts to raise money for our Guatemalan scholarships program.

As we look ahead to 2007, the Meeting hopes to landscape its side yard, to better complement the activities of the Meeting community.

With this State of Society report comes our love and shared hope for increasing joy, justice, and peace in our families, communities and the world.