

Celo Friends State of the Meeting Report for 2016  
Submitted March 2017

Celo Friends Meeting continues to thrive. Meeting for Worship includes members and attenders of all ages, and many gathered meetings arise from the silence that we hold dear. Our community is strengthened by weekly pot-luck meals following Meeting for Worship and by widespread participation in forums, workdays, meaningful community outreach activities, and Friendly Eights gatherings.

Our Meeting is blessed with many children and with dedicated adult participation in children's programming. Having intimate relationships with the earth is an important component of First Day School. We take unhurried nature walks where we identify things we find and explore relationships between living things. Our teen group dropped in attendance this year. However, we hosted a successful SAYF retreat. In planning the retreat, the teens deepened their understanding of Quaker process and its value. The nursery group meets each First Day, and they practice virtues of friendliness and cooperation while they play. They sometimes join the elementary group for nature walks. Twelve children created a shadow puppet show for Christmas that depicted the life of Harriet Tubman and was filled with songs. The program was well attended, and donations went to the local chapter of the NAACP. A local pastor from the African American church came with his daughter to one of our practices, and he invited us to perform the song "Harriet Tubman" at his church for the community's MLK birthday celebration. The Meeting has implemented a Child Protection Policy, as recommended by SAYMA.

The Adult Religious Education Committee offered many stimulating educational opportunities in 2016. Central to this energetic effort is the participation of young-adult attenders as well as new committee members. Max Carter ended the 2015-2016 educational series with a well-attended talk on The Inner Light and his personal journey. Beginning in October 2016, the Meeting began to explore the core testimonies of simplicity and integrity. Dan Snyder began the series with the talk entitled "Journey In, Journey Out: Discerning and Living the Quaker Testimonies of Simplicity and Integrity." In November a panel, composed of attenders and members, led a discussion on the realities underpinning the talk given the previous month. Following this inward discernment, the educational series is moving "outward" to discuss the core issues of discrimination and domination of native Americans through an understanding of the Doctrine of Discovery (January 2017), issues surrounding immigration and our changing political environment (February 2017), understanding what it means to be Muslim in America (March 2017), and Welcoming our LGBT Neighbors (April 2017). The Friendly Eights groups remain active, and discussion is centered on the topics from each of the monthly Adult Education presentations.

The Building and Grounds committee continued its caring stewardship by organizing workdays for routine care and preventive maintenance both inside and outside the meetinghouse. Workdays were well attended; good cheer abounded along with wonderful fellowship around food provided by generous and talented Friends. A storm dropped a tree on the porch of the meeting house, but the damage was covered by insurance and

was promptly and beautifully restored by meeting members and community friends. The Meeting was prompted to do a survey of the many trees surrounding the meetinghouse and has dedicated funds to remove potential ‘problem’ trees. We were challenged with differences of opinion on how areas of the meetinghouse grounds are to be used. By waiting patiently in the Light, we have been led to handle the matter with tenderness and have found solutions that preserve the unity of the Meeting.

Our participation in the yearly SAYMA gathering was enhanced last year by our providing a record number of scholarships, which encouraged attendance of several young-adult members and attenders from Celo. Participants presented their experiences to the Meeting in an afternoon forum.

Community outreach for Peace and Social Concerns is based upon the interest brought to the Meeting by individuals. Meeting members and attenders are active in the local NAACP chapter and in local political action groups. They have brought many opportunities for Meeting participation in gatherings and actions that focus on voter rights, immigration, eco-justice concerns, and sanctuary support. The Samburu Project, which has supported the education of young women and peace initiatives in Kenya for five years, is nearing completion of its work.

The Meeting participates in the Feed-a-Child community initiative with financial support and with the dedicated work of several members and attenders. A committee for the purpose consists of three food purchasers and deliverers and a financial tracker. Committee members purchase healthy foods for 341 students in local schools each week and deliver them to the children while they are in school. The emphasis is on fresh fruit and nuts for snacks. The students, especially those in Hispanic communities, are very happy to receive fresh fruit.

Celo Friends Meeting continues its relationship with the Friends Committee on National Legislation. The Meeting participated in FCNL's process of identifying priorities by discerning and submitting our meeting's priorities for legislative lobbying. Our FCNL contact is a member of this year's FCNL Advocacy Corps and has received support from the Meeting on lobbying, writing letters to the editor, and building connections with other local places of worship as she organizes for immigration reform.

Many Friends are involved in promoting the stewardship of our environment. A member has received the support of the Meeting to carry her ministry on eco-justice to the wider community of Friends.

The Meeting lost two cherished members during 2016, Bob Barrus and Donna O’Toole. We were prompted to work on issues of record-keeping related to the passing of Friends, and we continue to seek and find ways to support aging or ailing members and attenders. Several individuals are taking active leadership roles in the newly formed “My Neighbors” initiative to help elders in the extended local community remain independent.

Our Meeting is truly blessed with active and spiritually seeking members and attenders who enliven each other’s lives and deepen our shared worship.