

SOUTH BERKSHIRE FRIENDS MEETING

STATE OF SOCIETY 2010

In 2010 we celebrated a Jubilee Year along with other members of our Yearly Meeting. While our Meeting dates only to 1984, we share in the rich history of Friends in New England and elsewhere. Since we did not submit a formal State of Society report in 2010, we will offer, in this report, a reading of the state of our society over the last two years.

2009 marked our twenty-fifth year as a Monthly Meeting. A celebration of this was eagerly anticipated and we excitedly devoted considerable time over several months towards planning what would be a joyful and significant gathering of our own and our neighboring community. On the day of the event, our Meeting House was filled with grateful, happy Friends and guests. Our celebration included talks, skits, music, poetry and good fellowship. Walter Wink's talk "Non-Violence for the Violent" preceded a delightful series of skits on non-violence written by Walter and joyfully performed by our entire First Day School children. As a "gathered" fellowship we were all involved in the planning, organizing and presentation of this notable event.

The suggested theme for this year's report is "How does the Truth prosper among you"? We take it that Truth lives in the core "silence" of our worship that gently urges voice and action that is consistent with the Quaker experience. The unchanging presence that is our Truth lives through the Quaker values that we attempt to live and express in the world. It begins with our silent worship. It is not bound by time but does fully participate in the Quaker heritage that urges us to an expectant openness to the leading of Spirit. The heart of our Meeting, the Meeting for Worship, has become "quieter". Our shared silence has deepened and at times approaches what Quakers call the "Gathered Meeting". When thus corporately gathered, a sense of peace and serenity pervades our worship. We hold to the sense of corporate worship as it is understood in our tradition and accept that this is an ideal towards which we are moving. We are grateful that our worship is not dominated by excessive and repetitive speaking. We value balanced worship where both the silence and vocal ministry are consistent with each other. We are committed to explore in increasing depth the Truth as it is expressed in our Meeting for Worship as well as our Ministry in the outside world.

We are grateful that the period of disharmony that we experienced a few years ago has receded both in our memories and in our fellowship. We are able to assimilate our roots in Quaker history and the diverse composition of our community. Our fellowship consists of Christians, non-Christians, believers as well as doubters. An ecumenical spirit pervades our interactions both with each other and with the wider Quaker community and is, we believe, a prospering of Truth as it deeply lives in the Light that we all share. A recent contribution to this ecumenism is our program of Bible Studies. We are so very fortunate to have Walter and June Keener Wink in our fellowship. Walter's book "Transforming Bible Studies" has revealed for us a living and contemporary source of deep, relevant, spiritual and psychological insights. The non-sectarian reading of the passages we have studied has bonded us together, we believe, in a brotherhood and sisterhood that touches the essence of Quakerism. We celebrate the absence of non-sectarian strife that we often see revealed in the world around us.