

## **2015 State of SAYMA Report:**

18 Monthly Meetings submitted State of the Meeting reports (Asheville, Atlanta, Berea, Birmingham, Boone, Brevard, Celo, Charleston, Chattanooga, Cookeville, Crossville, Greenville, Huntsville, Memphis, Nashville, Oxford, Swannanoa, W. Knoxville.) The committee did not receive 3 reports in time to include in our state of the meeting report for SAYMA.

Monthly Meeting responded to the following queries: What challenges have arisen this year? How have we as a group met them and how has that changed us? How has the meeting lived the testimonies this year? What have been your disappointments and your joys?

The responses were all over the map, literally—as we are geographically far flung—and figuratively in that some meetings grew, while others shrunk; some were flush with funds, others struggled to contribute to the SAYMA census; some enjoyed children and young people while others wished young friends blessed their meetings.

Still, some common challenges, joys, and concerns emerged. Many Monthly Meetings were challenged with stewardship of often limited funds, discerning how best to use funds. Those that owned a meeting house strive to discern the best way to care for and maintain their properties in an environmentally responsible way. Those that did not own a meeting house faced the challenges and benefits of that condition.

Most Monthly Meeting addressed changing demographics of declining or growing attendance Meetings addressed these changes in various ways. Several work towards care and inclusion of older Friends with home visits or transporting those in need to meeting. Meetings with young Friends were enriched by their presence, but were challenged to rotate responsibility for First Day School.

Several Meetings were working through conflict and crisis, and M&N noted a rising interesting in Meetings for Healings perhaps related to that trend. Some Monthly Meetings centered on inward care of current attenders and some reached outward to expand their numbers. Whether growing or not, most monthly meetings expressed concern about limited involvement in committee work. Committees languished without clerks or without members to do the work. Some people serve for years on committees or other positions rather than positions being rotated to others.

Monthly Meetings expressed a commitment to work through their issues in community. Several worked to deepen worship experiences and to educate themselves on the role of vocal ministry in doing so. They offered hospitality and welcome to visitors and newcomers. Meetings created spaces for their communities to come together: home visits to worship with older Friends; Friendly 8 groups; potlucks that continue to nurture community; and Meetings for Healing.

Monthly Meetings "let [their] lives speak in a multitude of inspiring ways, particularly in areas of peace and social concerns, racial justice, and Earthcare. Several meetings are active with AVP. Many are involved with Israel/Palestine issues and welcoming Syrian refugees. Cookeville taxes themselves 10 cents a gallon for each gallon of gas used and uses collected funds for Earthcare.

These State of the Meeting Reports showed a commitment to Monthly Meetings and that in our meetings, we see Quakerism as vital and important. Monthly Meetings and Friends matter for us! SAYMA M&N gained inspiration, encouragement, and a sense of connection to a larger community from reading these reports.

-Volunteer for SAYMA M&N if you would enjoy this sense of re-engagement and inspiration!