

William Penn House Report 2016

I became acquainted with William Penn House in 2013 by a coincidence in which I am certain was arranged by my Higher Power. I was planning a trip to Washington DC but uncertain about how I could find lodging within my financial realities. I google searched for the Quaker Meeting House and found the William Penn House listed on a Hostel Site. This was the perfect scenerio for me. I was dealing with the recent death of my husband. The William Penn House provided the peaceful healing energy that I needed to get through that difficult time. I have since taken several trips to Washington DC and usually stay at the William Penn House. It was finally suggested that I become a William Penn House Representative.

My first official visit as a William Penn House Representative was in November of 2014. We started out by having Lunch at the South East White House. This is a center where the local clergy work together to serve the blighted neighborhood while mentoring the youth to guild them on a positive path. There were meetings afterwards with discussions about the Youth Work Camps that the William Penn House. Young people travel to Washington DC and stay at the William Penn House. They go into the underserved neighborhood working the neighborhood locals with various improvement projects including community gardens. The two groups of youth within a few days gain a positive propection of each other that would not happen if they had not worked together.

There was also discussion on the legal dilemma that William Penn House faces with the City of Washington DC. The DC City Tax Collectors are of the opinion that the William Penn House is a hospitality business thus not entitled to the tax exempt status of a Religious Organization. This could potentially cause to William Penn House to close down or at least relocate where they would not be as effective as they currently are. This is a legal battle that is still pending.

2016 brings a new Executive Director because the previous Executive Director Byron Stafford retired. The new executive director Andrei Israel came on board in in January. He's been a long term member of Baltimore Yearly Meeting and recently has returned from Binghamton, New York where he was a professor.

Next year they are hoping to be able to have a staff member attend the SAYNA annual session, but this year the logistics couldn't work for that. I do travel to Washington DC but cannot always get booking at the William Penn house. Priority is given to youth groups and sometimes they are completely full before opening up individual reservations. I have learned to find out when there is availability and make plans accordingly.

On SAYMA's donations to William Penn House: SAYMA has long been a faithful supporter, and has made an annual contribution of \$200 for the past several years. Funds are tight within a small yearly meeting, but I was told that an increased contribution would be very helpful and appreciated

Another way that we can support the William Penn House is by having SAYMA or the individual meetings to have programs that would support the religious tax exempt status. The High Schoolers can participate in the youth programs while some of the older Friends can lobby. The William Penn House is a short walk from the Capitol where the Senate and Representatives reside on either side of the Building. It is also an even shorter walk from the Folger Shakespeare Theatre for lovers of Culture with the Library of Congress nearby.

The William Penn House was founded in the fall of 1966 thus are celebrating the 50th anniversary this year. Friends can consider making a special contribution in honor of this milestone. Donation envelope are available with the materials on the table that I plan to set up. Contributions of any amount are needed and welcomed. Often the collective strength of individuals making small donations exceeds what monthly or yearly meetings can donate corporately.

On the property tax issue, The appeal is ongoing. We need to continuously hold the William Penn House up in the Light and Prayer as they struggle with the DC government about this.

Respectfully Submitted

Bonnie Isaacs – SAYMA William Penn House Representative