

Spiritual State of the Meeting, 2017

Takoma Park Friends Meeting, Preparative

As heard in Quaker Discussion, 11/19/17; and improved in Worshipful Business Meeting, 12/17/17

We are a meeting on the edge, balanced precariously on the effort of a few people, seeking stability both materially and spiritually.

Our lack of human resources is stark. We have four people covering all the work to keep the meeting running. This year we laid down our last committee due to lack of meetings in over a year. While there have been other attenders willing to do work, the meeting has not done enough to retain those Friends.

Attendance has been low as well. Meetings for worship with just two Friends are not an uncommon occurrence. With a lack of attenders has been a lack of financial resources. We have a viable budget for 2018. However, with lower expected donations, a higher apportionment, and higher rental costs, we are drawing down reserves and our anticipated contribution to the building fund for 2017 is merely a token \$50.

Even our meetings for worship with a concern for business have suffered. Last year we described our business meetings as having “an energy, a power, or a worshipful feeling.” This year we described them as “respectful.”

Friends expressed doubt in the sustainability of this situation.

We still value our meeting. The silence of our meeting helps us calm down at the end of a stressful week. It provides a pause in the hectic pace of our lives. We find the messages given help us with having more consideration of other views. At the same time, we feel a lack of content. We cherish the silence, but it is, perhaps, too much of a good thing.

We have not given up. Many ideas were expressed for dealing with the lack of resources and content. But we must clearly see where we are if we are to move forward.