

Midlothian Friends Meeting
2025 Spiritual State of the Meeting Report
Finalized during Meeting for Discernment on May 10, 2026

At Midlothian Friends Meeting (MFM), we share a sense of what Spirit means. Spirit is our Inner Teacher, a spark of the divine that nourishes our interconnectedness. It is a melding of unconditional love and service that keeps us together on our journey. It is our connective tissue. Spirit means “of the breath”, and it is the breath of light and love that permeates our Meeting. Since our Meeting is small, it is easier to feel this connection among us. Like the character in the movie, *Marcel the Shell with Shoes On*, we want to be connected to *everything*.

We embrace spiritual diversity. Some Friends are more Christ-centered, some identify as agnostic, but the same Spirit guides us. There is a sense of mysticism in our worship that is expressed through messages that arise from our shared silence.

Our worship is centered on the recognition of that of God in everyone. One Friend described it as “a Big Light that puts a little light into us all.” Each person has their own definition of God. We acknowledge these differences without judgment. We focus on sharing and finding common ground. We are on a journey to seek truth, and to act rightly because of God and the goodness in people.

Our beliefs should be evident in our relationships, enabling us to do right by everyone. Though we avoid arbitrary rules of worship, our testimonies of SPICES are those with which many people can agree. Quakerism is stripped down to what really matters.

Where we do find challenges, though, is in trying to unite with those of different political beliefs. In some ways, we have “self-selected” so that there is little political diversity in our Meeting. While those who differ politically may not feel comfortable here, we seek for everyone to feel loved and connected. Our mission statement written many years ago, states it clearly, “all are welcome.”

Our approach to individual and community leadings can be characterized as “I try, we try.” We cannot always be certain what to believe about God or Spirit, but we can keep trying. The pursuit of truth and unity is central to our purpose and is our primary motivation.

The wider Quaker community has encouraged us to follow certain leadings. For example, BYM queries on racism led us to form a study group on racial justice. Our work on immigrant justice was inspired by Sally Gudas’ efforts to organize transportation for immigrants to meet their needs as well as VICPP and Central Virginia Sanctuary Network, and carried forward under Peter Farago’s leadership. We also draw inspiration from Friends Committee on National Legislation (FCNL) and American Friends Service Committee (AFSC).

Participation in Meeting brings us into contact with others committed to social justice. The Quaker tradition has long been at the forefront of such efforts, and there is a sense of both power and love in that legacy. Events like the Buddhist peace marchers passing through Richmond inspired us to act. Our actions are outgrowths of our beliefs; this is essential for Quakers.

Our Peace and Social Action Committee (PSAC) embodies the hands of God in action. Among its accomplishments this year, PSAC facilitated the Racial Justice Study Group (including several book studies), sponsored several events raising attention to peace in Palestine and Israel, and was a community partner in Run Richmond 16.19.

There are ongoing efforts to clarify the use of our finances and how we allocate our resources for spiritual growth. Our financial stewardship committee is meeting more often and is in communication with the Thrifty Quaker Board to encourage a more robust relationship.

The Thrifty Quaker thrift store, which is associated with MFM, donates much of its proceeds to multiple charities every month. Last year, donations amounted to more than \$80,000. Friend\$hare, which provides grants to non-Quakers for urgent expense needs such as rent, utilities, and the like, paid out over \$8,000.

Sometimes, dropping one leading makes room for another that is more suitable. One Friend needed to step back from many “practical” tasks, such as the cleaning and maintenance of the meetinghouse, so that she could better focus on spiritual issues. This led to her reconstituting our Spiritual Nurture Committee, which she has been clerking ever since. The committee’s work has been huge. It has provided new opportunities to seek the Spirit, coordinated readings for our Circle of Friends discussion group, and welcomed different voices. The committee also rewrote last year’s queries for the Spiritual State of the Meeting report to better fit the needs and aspirations of MFM. Interest in spiritual nurture is growing.

Last year, we lost one of our most dedicated and loved members, Howard Brod, who passed away in April. In some ways, Howard was the hub of the wheel at Midlothian Friends Meeting. We will always feel his loss. His passing has left a legacy of “it’s your turn to lead now.” Many in Meeting have stepped up to take on some of the tasks Howard used to perform, and to find new ways to contribute. We know we can never replace Howard, but we can move forward thanks to all who are helping now.

We responded to another leading, which resulted in our becoming associated with Wild Roots Homeschool Group. The group now meets weekly at our meetinghouse. They were attracted by the beauty and peacefulness of our meetinghouse and grounds as well as our affirming and welcoming beliefs for LGBTQ people. We worked together to ensure a smooth transition, and it has been a good fit for both of us. The young students have been enjoying their new environment and may be learning more about Quaker values along the way.

Friends also have personal leadings. We volunteer. We show caring in our daily encounters with others. We find inspiration in nature and the beauty around us. Two

quotations describe our motivation: "The way to most deeply honor someone is to say, 'I see you'," and "Those who have no smile to give in return need it the most."

We respond to needs within our Meeting. A recent example involves a Friend's brother in Jamaica who lost virtually everything during Hurricane Melissa. We received contributions to help repair the road leading to his home in the mountains, so supplies and equipment can be brought in.

We have two Care Coordinators, who act as contacts when there is a need for care and/or consolation. They do a great job, and they need gentle support too. We all need to do our part. We follow the dictum, "service starts at the rise of worship." One Friend shared that he wants "to believe and do, do and believe, on and on."

We try to treat each other tenderly. The word "tenderly" evokes the image of tending a flock with care and attention, and that seems appropriate. Friends say they feel the support and caring of Meeting. One Friend said she felt like MFM was "home" after only a few visits. Another Friend expressed gratitude for the profound tenderness she felt from Friends during the time her mother was in hospice care and after her mother passed away. While we are doing well, there is always room for growth – especially in reaching out to those who might feel lost or forgotten. We would also welcome young families and children.

A Friend who was in a rehab facility needed our companionship and support. Creating a system to invite other Friends to sit with her would have more fully addressed this unmet need. We can also visit people in prison and work for prison reform. We can partner with other faith communities and organizations, such as the Powhatan Council of Churches.

Additionally, it may help to provide resources to encourage awareness and communication about needs within the Meeting. We should also consider our outreach to visitors: after someone attends, do we follow up? While some outreach may happen informally, a more structured approach could be beneficial.

Midlothian Friends open their hearts and minds to introspection, gratitude, appreciation of the beauty around us, and moments of stillness and silence — these help bring us together and make the ordinary extraordinary. We are thankful for everyone who contributes to our community, and grateful for this spiritual home we share.