STATE OF SOCIETY REPORT FOR 2016, ALBANY SOCIETY OF FRIENDS (QUAKERS)

In this politically challenging year, Albany Friends Meeting is especially grateful for our welcoming and caring Meeting community:

+ “Outreach and Advancement” organized a retreat on “Vocal Ministry” led by Christopher Sammond, attended by twenty-five members/attenders. We have made our meeting house more attractive, with a welcoming flag and the removal of some street front hedges. We organized several “Friendly Potlucks” at members’ homes. We are participating in the work of the NYYM “Outreach Working Group.”

+ “Friends for Racial Justice” worked with other community activists to sponsor “Stories for Racial Healing,” where we share personal stories with a racial component. Our stories include personal successes or failures in education, criminal justice and social services in a culture of white privilege. Several committee members attended the “White Privilege Conference last March in Philadelphia.

+ Members of “Peace and Earthcare” joined solidarity vigils to support Native Americans at Standing Rock. We participated in the ‘Stop DAPL/Divest’ demonstrations in Albany, Hudson and New Paltz. We also participated in the “Jewish Voices for Peace” vigil at Chanukah in Colonie, our monthly peace vigil at the State Capitol, the rally in opposition to Governor Cuomo’s anti-free speech resolution, the North Star Interfaith Peace Walk and ‘Moral Monday’ rallies.

+ Members and attenders responded generously to our Trustees’ appeal for financial contributions. We made basic repairs to our meeting house. Our meeting house is used regularly by sixteen community groups including: Women Against War; Mindfulness-based Stress Reduction; Home School Group of the Capital District; Re-evaluation Counseling; United to End Racism; Debtors Anonymous; Albany Cuba Solidarity; and Sant Mat Meditation, Counseling (Buddhist.)

+ Our Ministry and Nurture Committee is trying a different schedule for Worship Sharing in hopes of increasing attendance. We have successfully reactivated our Faith and Practice discussion group: we now meet monthly and are currently reading and discussing Jessamyn West’s “The Quaker Reader.” We held a memorial service for our member, Bettina Wolff, and we welcomed a new member, Janet Poole, and also Elizabeth Gordon, who has transferred membership to our Meeting. We continue our mid-week Meeting for Worship in a nursing home in which a member resides.

Five people from Albany Friends Meeting attended ARCH visitor training in the past decade and are a resource for our Meeting. (ARCH stands for “Aging, Resources, Consultation and Help”.) We have offered members/attenders the use of a secure safe box in which to store their final life directives (end of life care and memorial plans.)

+ Our First Day School committee has shaped its program around the needs of families, and it goes beyond lessons on Sunday. A series of topics on refugees was integrated into our traditional and spontaneous live Christmas Eve Nativity pageant. One of the children shared his experiences with the Meeting as follows:

“There is something different every week at First Day School.

We learn what Quakers do. We learn about famous Quakers.

We wish First Day School was bigger.

We get to talk to the adults about things. They listen to us.

Sitting in silence can be kind of long and boring, the adults are

Sitting and listening for God. We are sitting and waiting.

We would like to learn more games that Quakers do.

The people of Albany Meeting are kind.”