

State of the Meeting Report

Strawberry Creek Monthly Meeting, 2024

Strawberry Creek Meeting is emerging from the pandemic with a sense of healing, as well as with altered shapes and rhythms, both in the way we worship and in the way we do our work. What holds us together, the invisible principle that some call Spirit, is made visible in our love for each other, in our worship together, and in our shared decisions. Some sense a deepening of Spirit in our worship, our mutual care, and the service of individuals beyond our monthly meeting.

The times have pushed us to be nimble, and Spirit has likewise been nimble. Although in-person worship has been our assumed practice for centuries, many have sensed Spirit in the sweetness and love within daily online healing meetings convened for a member who was in a terrible accident mid-year. Our location challenges have not prevented Spirit from inspiring us with leadings, and we have been able to make several important same-day decisions as a Meeting. Some members have noted a sense of healing and renewed enthusiasm, inklings of Spirit's movement among us.

The Meeting continues to deepen our anti-racism accountability practices. The Power, Privilege and Race subcommittee has created spaces where our Meeting continues to discern what is happening within us as individuals, as a Meeting, and in the wider society in which we live, and what we should do.

In listening to Friends speaking at this year's listening meeting for this report, we sensed a growth of optimism. Though there remain issues to be resolved, many Friends remarked feeling much more at ease with our hybrid worship than they had last year, when they might have felt that they couldn't reach Spirit or Friends through Zoom. One Friend said, "Where the Spirit speaks to me, that is where I am at home. And Spirit speaks to me loud and clear on Zoom." Another shared that they "have moved from resenting Zoom, because it wasn't what I wanted, to being grateful for Zoom." Though we continue to have issues that we want to address as a community, the tone of our concerns seems to hold less anxiety than a year ago.

Business Meeting remains wholly on Zoom, while worship has developed a hybrid form, partly in-person and partly on Zoom. Twice a month our Meeting, which rents its space, sets up a big screen and a microphone, so that those worshipping in-person may see and hear those on Zoom, and vice-versa. Twice a month the in-person and Zoom meetings occur "side by side," where some meet in-person only and some gather via Zoom only. We have done well so far in making

these forms of worship possible, but there is concern in the Meeting that those who have been hosting Zoom meetings and setting up and taking down the technical facilities needed for it are getting tired.

In February 2023 a Revisioning Committee was created, in order to gather a sense of where we are now, how we are changing, and how we may wish to change, as a Meeting. The committee was tasked, in particular, with exploring how committees are working, meeting site considerations, and how we may more joyfully occupy our hybrid worship experience, as well as how to increase vitality within the Meeting, especially in light of declining attendance and aging members. We learned that some simplification of committees and roles has already naturally taken place, mostly without the loss of tenderness towards each other. We also learned that a more flexible Meeting structure was emerging, and that many were satisfied with the new, more simplified structures. We concluded, though, that the rented physical meeting space does not meet the current needs of the Meeting. We approved the formation of an ad hoc site search committee in January 2024 to explore other possible spaces to rent, with an emphasis on worship space, community building space, and a welcoming space for our children.

We feel a sense of deep gratitude for those people from Strawberry Creek Meeting who have “gone out into the world” to offer service to larger issues and concerns, such as homelessness, earth care, and chaplaincy work. Appreciation was expressed for anchor committees which have supported some of this work in the wider world. Gratitude was also expressed for the Huichin land of the Lisjan (Ohlone) people upon which we live and worship.

Overall, the Meeting seems to be feeling a sense of optimism about what is ahead as we emerge from stresses experienced during the pandemic. We feel deep gratitude for ongoing life and the presence of Spirit within our beloved Meeting community.

Submitted by,

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