

Strawberry Creek Monthly Meeting
State of the Meeting Report 2007-2008

Each year, we ask ourselves how truth has fared among us. We try to identify our Meeting's leading edges. Strawberry Creek Monthly Meeting is approaching its 30th year, having become a preparative meeting in October 1976 and a monthly meeting in 1979. Reading our past state of the meeting reports, we see our roots and our new growth.

In May 1978 the Meeting wrote "Our only standing committee continues to be the First Day School Committee", and, in May 1982, Meeting wrote "The First Day School program is well-organized and a significant part of the Meeting's life." First Day School remains a significant focus and this year saw a reinvigorated program. We continue to grow through the work we do with our children. This year we have been thoughtful about how to integrate children into the larger community, as well as to bring our community to the children. The First Day School elective series has brought Friends into the classroom to share their witness in the world. Younger teens have taken an active role in focusing their activities, educating themselves about youth in prisons in California. Care for children, including how to keep them safe in the spaces we occupy, has occupied us this year.

In May 1980 the Meeting wrote "We are moving from doing all business in business meeting to doing more business by committee. We are slowly learning to trust our committees." Our community greatly appreciates the work of all sixteen standing committees, both those that are the hands and feet of the Meeting and those that tend to heart and conscience. Some of us, pondering questions from Pacific Yearly Meeting's year of discernment, wonder if the number of committees and their responsibilities exceed our capabilities.

Many have expressed gratitude for the personal care and friendships that they have experienced at Strawberry Creek Meeting. For some, including scattered Strawberry Creek Friends, participation in the life of the Meeting ebbs and flows, but connection to the Meeting community remains meaningful. In May 1984, the Meeting wrote that "we are comforted as we see how loving support has been given in times of distress," and in April 1997, the Meeting said "There is a deep and active caring for one another in the meeting." We continue to long to nurture more, reach out more, and connect more. This striving is part of who we are.

Our size continues to be a blessing and a challenge. In May 1980, Meeting had "approximately 60 regular worshippers, including about 15 children" with "19 adult members." Today, Strawberry Creek has 98 members, and our Meetings sometimes number over 100 worshippers. This year, we welcomed three new members, and three babies were born to members and attenders. We said goodbye to three Friends who

moved to Colorado, Tennessee, and British Columbia. Two memberships were laid down at the request of Friends who have lived elsewhere for many years, and three memberships were transferred. Meeting held three memorial meetings, two for attenders and one for a member's spouse. Meeting approved memorial minutes for two members, one who passed away in the previous year and one who had been living outside the area for several years, and marked the passing of one of the mothers of two young Friends.

In May 1984, Meeting wrote "The physical growth of our Meeting has strengthened us by giving us greater diversity. It has also caused some discomfort ..." In May 2001, Meeting reported "We are conscious of the need to maintain community as we grow in numbers." In the Over-the-Hill-and-Through-the-Tunnel and other cluster groups, friendly sevens, young adult gatherings, mid-week and Oakland worship, eco-activities, and other smaller groups within the meeting, we seek to create deeper experiences and connections. But our large group also nourishes us. Many have spoken of the depth of ministry and silence. We continue to ask: How do we reach out to newcomers? Are all made to feel welcome? How do we handle the conversation about latecomers? How do we do the work of all our committees? Is it possible to do our work more smoothly, so that our need for rest and rejuvenation is honored?

In 1982, the Meeting wrote "We began this year to move outward from worship to witness as a Meeting." At present, many Strawberry Creek Friends are very actively working - individually in our work in the world, in committee, and in small affinity groups - to heal the earth, connect with those in need, and sow the seeds of peace. We also work to connect with the larger Quaker community and diverse Quaker organizations. These works sustain us and deepen our worship. During the past year, Meeting has both sent and welcomed traveling Friends. Many participate actively in organizations that sustain a Quaker presence in the larger world, including: Alternatives to Violence Project, American Friends Service Committee, Ben Lomond Quaker Center, Berkeley Food Pantry, Friends Committee on Legislation, Friends World Media, Quaker Earthcare Witness, Quaker Institute for the Future, and Sierra Friends Center. Strawberry Creek Meeting approved the Congregational Covenant of California Interfaith Power and Light, and became a participating member of the National Religious Campaign Against Torture. One Friend touched us deeply with her refusal to sign a loyalty oath unless it could be altered to reflect her beliefs, reminding us that Friends testimonies on peace and on integrity are alive among us today, and that living with integrity has an impact on the world around us.

Meetings for Worship continue to be deep and centered. We have been blessed by ministry in Meeting and in the world, and the spiritual life of the Meeting is rich. Some of us go through arid periods as individuals, but we keep coming back to Meeting for Worship even when the well seems dry. The Meeting remains a real and powerful presence in our lives.

We seek to tend our garden faithfully in meeting for worship and business, as well as in

our community efforts. While we nourish ourselves, we also seek to grow abundantly enough so that we may feed the larger community.

Approved, Strawberry Creek Monthly Meeting
May 11, 2008