

STRAWBERRY CREEK MEETING
STATE OF THE MEETING REPORT

(MAY 1980)

I. STATISTICS:

Strawberry Creek Meeting has approximately 60 regular worshipers, including about 15 children. Approximately 40 Friends attend Meeting for Worship. Strawberry Creek has ~~17~~ 19 adult members and 8 children, with ~~4~~ 4 transfer requests pending. In the past year, 15 Friends transferred membership to Strawberry Creek, 3 new members were approved, and one child was born. One marriage was allowed and one marriage under the care of Cambridge Meeting was joyously celebrated by our meeting.

II. MEETINGS:

A. Worship

Our meetings continue to be centered and nurturing. They are characterized by little vocal ministry, but that vocal ministry that manifests itself is centered and to the point. We are looking into the possibility of renting space but we are still meeting in people's homes. Though our mid-week meetings were recently laid down, many in our meeting feel the need for extra meetings for worship. On months with five Sundays, numbers of us would visit with other meetings on that fifth Sunday.

B. Business

Our meetings for business are attended by 15 to 20 people. They are shorter than in years past, but remain a troubled spot, due primarily to inexperience. One area of particular concern to our meeting, with which we wrestle without clarity, is Friends' perceptions regarding membership and, specifically, the requirement that certain meeting offices be filled by members only. In our meeting, many non-members fill roles that require deep commitment and knowledge of the ways of Friends. We have made progress in resolving questions of finance, including making regular contributions to Friends' organizations and concerns.

III. COMMITTEES:

Since becoming a monthly meeting, we have developed a full compliment of committees including a Fun Committee and a Visiting Committee. We have a standing Oversight Committee, but ministry and worship continues to be performed by the Committee of the Whole for Ministry and Worship. Though the meeting seems to feel the need for a standing committee for ministry and worship, the question of membership of that committee limited to members of the Society remains a concern.

The meeting is still determining structure, type and responsibilities to be given the committees. We are moving from doing all business in business meeting to doing more business by committee. We are slowly learning to trust our committees.

IV. RETREATS AND CELEBRATIONS:

We continue to be friends as well as Friends. We have celebrated Christmas, Thanksgiving, welcomed our new members when we became a monthly meeting, and received our newlyweds with exuberance and joy. Many members joined with Berkeley meeting in sunrise meeting on Easter. We have held two in-town retreats and one in Ben Lomond. Deep spiritual discussion and sharing have marked our retreats, punctuated by warm fellowship.

V. OTHER QUAKER ACTIVITIES:

Many in our meeting participate in Friends organizations and committees. Our meeting derives much satisfaction and sustenance from this participation.

VI. STATUS:

This year marked the end of one journey for our meeting and the beginning of another. After long thought and preparation, we were allowed to become a full monthly meeting by the Quarterly Meeting. Thus, the meeting is one in transition and in birthing. Much work remains to be done, but the meeting, with the help of God, will arise strengthened from the process.

STATE OF THE SOCIETY REPORT, Strawberry Creek Preparative Meeting May, 1979

Statistics

Strawberry Creek Preparative Meeting continues as a community of about 85 people, 60 adults and 25 children. We hold Meetings for Worship on First Days in individual homes, staying 1-2 months, with up to 40 adults and 10 children in regular attendance. Eighteen of our adults are members of Berkeley Monthly Meeting; eight are members of other Monthly Meetings. Attendance at Meetings for Business fluctuates but often begins with about 20 people present.

We have welcomed a new child born into the Meeting this year and celebrated the acceptance into membership through Berkeley Monthly Meeting of two or our attenders.

This last year has been one of growth and struggle for our Meeting as we faced many issues raised by our central concern: moving toward Monthly Meeting status. Whereas a year ago our only standing committee was that of First Day School, we have now added a Committee of the Whole on Worship and Ministry, an Oversight Committee, a Nominating Committee, a Finance Committee, and a Peace and Social Order Coordinator.

Ministry and Worship

While Meeting for Worship has continued to be the central, gathering focus for our community, a number of us have felt fluctuations in the depths of worship this past year. A small midweek Meeting for Worship has continued. Two special Meetings for Worship were held, one during the time of Peoples Temple and the deaths of Harvey Milk and George Moscone, a second on Easter at sunrise. Discussion continues about purchasing or renting a place for Meeting for Worship.

It was decided last spring to separate the function of ministry from that of oversight and to make the experimental Committee of the Whole on Ministry and Worship into a standing committee. An Oversight Committee was later formed. The separation of the committees reflects our inability to reach unity on the issue of membership.

We continue to seek ways to educate ourselves as Friends. Monthly conversations on the spiritual life, begun in the summer, dwindled in the fall. An adult reading group was laid down. This spring we begin three new forms" 1) a weekly spiritual sharing group 2) a once a month reading of Quaker literature after Meeting for Worship and 3) a once a month discussion on contemporary issues in Quakerism following Meeting for Worship. Meeting has also decided to hold visitations to other Meetings on the fifth Sundays of the month.

Business Meetings

The issue of becoming a Monthly Meeting has been a central one this year. Tension in our Business Meetings, particularly evolving around the responsibilities of membership, led to discussions of our acceptance of the guidelines in Faith and Practice. We welcomed visits from our Oversight Committee of Berkeley Monthly Meeting and an informal visit from the CPQM Subcommittee on New Meetings. We are grateful for their contributions to us. After a special threshing session, we were able to reach unity and to submit an application to Berkeley Monthly Meeting in March for Monthly Meeting status.

We began this year to move outward from worship to witness as a Meeting. We took several steps in opposing Proposition 6. We selected a Peace and Social Order Coordinator. We received visits from representatives of PYM, AFSC, and FWCC in an effort to clarify our relationships to these organizations.

We established a Nominating Committee and a Finance Committee, recognizing our readiness to conduct finances independent of Berkeley Monthly Meeting.

Community Life

The community of Strawberry Creek continues to explore various ways of sharing. A Fun Committee planned several excursions well attended by both adults and children. We had two weekend retreats, also well-attended, in which we shared worship, current business, and personal interests. A mens' group is thriving and supportive for its members; a women's group was laid down in the fall. A monthly newsletter is a vital form of communicating. We recently enjoyed an issue prepared by the children. ~~Several~~ Several Strawberry Creek participants have formed sharing living arrangements.

Children

First Day School continues its format of two adults responsible for each month with a third person now caring for infants. Children join us for the last 15 minutes of Meeting. We continue to be concerned about how to provide a cohesive curriculum over the year's time. This year's program included visits to and from Sunday schools of other denominations.

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This year our need to develop the structures for conducting the business of our communal life, while often leading to long and painful Meetings for Business, has provided a rich groundwork for knowing each other and seeking reconciliation of our diverse views. Some feel we "survived by the skin of our teeth," others that we have grown in loving through our "family fights." We turn now to new questions: how we can be a visible Christian community, how we can look for our collective vocation or calling to witness.

On Behalf of Strawberry Creek Preparative Meeting
Lynne Bird, Clerk
Berkeley, California

STATISTICS

The Strawberry Creek Preparative Meeting continues to hold Meetings for Worship every First Day in our homes, staying from one to three months in each home. The Meeting has increased to about 75 participants, including adults and children, with a good spread of ages. Of these, 20 are members of Berkeley Monthly Meeting, and five are members of other Meetings. Attendance at Meeting for Worship is usually about 40 adults and 5 children; there are usually about 22 people present at Meetings for Business.

During the year, two participants became members of the Society. We celebrated one marriage and the births of two children.

We held a series of Quaker Dialogues in order to better understand various concerns that arose in the Meeting for Business, such as membership, commitment to the Meeting, and the size of the Meeting. These dialogues were useful in clarifying Friends' positions and finding the common ground in the Meeting.

The growing size and enthusiasm of the Meeting have also led to the formation of several groups. These included: an adult study group, under the care of the Meeting; a women's group; and a men's group, continued from last year. A small midweek morning Meeting for Worship was held regularly. Two weekend retreats, one in the fall and one in the spring, were well attended. Other Meeting events included several potlucks and a Christmas Craft Sale, but the small number of these social events was a concern to some. A monthly newsletter has helped to keep us all in touch with these activities as well as those of individual members.

CHILDREN

Our only standing committee continues to be the First Day School Committee, which coordinates activities for approximately sixteen children. In order to provide continuity for the children, one core person conducts the First Day School for a month, helped each week by different assistants. First Day School consists of discussions of Quakerism, biblical stories, and crafts.

In response to a concern, we experimented with having the children attend the last fifteen minutes of Meeting for Worship instead of the first fifteen minutes. The Meeting decided to continue this arrangement after a trial period of several months.

MEETING STATUS

During the year we continued to explore the meaning of being a "Preparative Meeting under the care of Berkeley Monthly Meeting". Members of the Committee for Oversight of Strawberry Creek, appointed by Berkeley Meeting, have regularly attended our Meetings for Worship and Meetings for Business, providing us with valuable experience and support.

While some individuals have served on various committees at Berkeley Meeting during the year, Strawberry Creek as a Meeting has tended not to have joint Berkeley-Strawberry Creek activities. Strawberry Creek participants have begun to think about the implications of becoming a Monthly

Meeting. We have taken steps to conduct our finances independent of Berkeley Meeting.

MINISTRY AND OVERSIGHT

As our Meeting has grown, the need for a function like a traditional Committee on Ministry and Oversight has emerged. Several stumbling blocks have arisen in the process of setting one up. Some feared that such a committee represented a delegation of responsibility. After seasoning and discussion, this particular issue was partially resolved. When it came time to nominate a committee, there was a lack of unity on the issue of the importance of formal membership in the Society of Friends for Committee members.

This spring we agreed to separate the function of ministry from that of oversight, because it was felt that the former could be done by a committee of the whole, and that the latter could not. A Committee of the Whole for Worship and Ministry was set up on an experimental basis, and the area of oversight was laid over; thus the issue of formal membership for committee members was temporarily avoided.

As an alternative to approaching a Ministry and Oversight Committee, individuals requesting assistance have been able to ask anyone in the Meeting to form an ad hoc Helping Group. This group then works with the individual for as long as is necessary. This arrangement has been ~~seldom used~~ *used on occasion!*

MEMBERSHIP

Strawberry Creek Preparative Meeting originally grew out of a Worship Group of individuals from Berkeley Meeting. Now, however, the majority of our participants have little personal connection to Berkeley Meeting. Many of us have previous experience with the Society of Friends, but ^{many} are relatively new to Friends' business practices. We continue to consider the difference in commitment and obligation between those who are formal members of the Society of Friends and those who are not.

QUALITY OF MEETING

While the quality of our Meetings for Business has varied considerably, we feel that it has improved as the year has progressed. The improvement has come with our increasing experience with and understanding of Quaker practices, and an ability to handle tensions.

There is a great deal of care and attention given to the life of the Meeting and the Meeting for Worship in particular. We believe that our Meeting for Worship and our other activities are growing in both quality and depth. There is some concern, however, that the Meeting as a whole has not undertaken any social action or witness.

Meeting for Worship continues to be deep and focussed, with an intensity and energy that sustains and renews us.

On behalf of Strawberry Creek Preparative Meeting
Barbara Perry, Presiding Clerk
Berkeley, California
May, 1978

STATE OF THE MEETING REPORT
STRAWBERRY CREEK PREPARATIVE MEETING

1977

After much discussion and prayerful consideration, South Berkeley Worship Group asked for preparative meeting status under the care of Berkeley Monthly Meeting. This request was approved at Berkeley's October 1976 meeting for business. We now meet as Strawberry Creek Preparative Meeting in the area of South Berkeley and North Oakland.

For the past year we have met in each others homes. We change homes every two months so that we will not burden any family by too long a stay, yet not change so frequently as to feel fragmented. We are not presently considering a meeting place outside our homes. We are content. Meeting in our own homes strengthens our sense of community and responsibility for nurturing the spiritual as well as physical well-being of our meeting.

We usually have 25 to 30 adults and 9 children at each meeting for worship. Twelve adult attenders are members of Berkeley Monthly Meeting and four are members of other Friends Meetings.

Since last May, four new families have begun attending meeting for worship. They account for the increase in children from 3 to 9. Consequently our first day school has changed. In the past, we have taken turns entertaining and instructing our children during the last 45 minutes of meeting. This month we began a series of more directed instruction using Friends General Conference materials. We have formed a First Day School committee -- our only standing committee. In addition to one committee, we have three clerks: presiding, recording, and transportation.

We are essentially an inward-turned gathering. We need and appreciate the spiritual strength and refreshment which comes to us through our deeply centered worship. The desire for centered worship brought us together two years ago. We are awed and delighted to find so often what we seek. Our thankfulness and care are expressed by the great regularity with which we attend worship, and the prayerful, patient endurance we bring to our business sessions. A further confirmation of our care for the life of the meeting is that we now meet regularly for business on the last Sunday of each month.

We continue to grow organically, in slow inches and sudden spurts. In all, we try to know the path God lays before us. When that path is undeniably clear, we do try to follow it.

On behalf of Strawberry Creek Preparative Meeting
Barbara Perry, Presiding Clerk
Berkeley, California
May 1977