

Strawberry Creek Monthly Meeting

State of the Meeting Report for 2005

As we reflect on the state of Strawberry Creek Monthly Meeting, we focus our attention on the needs and challenges of a growing meeting community. We continue to cherish the depth of the silence in our meetings for worship. We share our spoken ministry with the measure of the Light each of us has been given. We conduct our business with respect for all individuals and points of view. In a violent and damaged world, we discern how we can be instruments of healing and reconciliation. We ask ourselves where we are going as a meeting and where we are on our spiritual journey.

A Maturing Meeting Community

We continue to be blessed with new requests for membership. They challenge us to consider what it means to be a member and how we as a meeting take members under our care. It is especially challenging when these Friends must relocate far away from our community.

7 new memberships and 3 associate memberships were approved in the last year. 3 memberships were transferred to other meetings. Strawberry Creek currently has 97 members.

About 100 to 120 of us gather to worship each week. As we rise to meet the challenges of a growing meeting, we see signs of maturity. Some of our seasoned members have been able to reach out to help new members take on more responsibility. Our participation in other Quaker organizations such as Sierra Friends Center and Quaker Center continues to be strong. Strawberry Creek is well represented at yearly and quarterly meetings.

To increase our visibility in our South Berkeley neighborhood, we have raised our newly sewn banner with the message: "Plant Nurture Harvest Seeds of Peace." We display our new banner in front of the school where we worship on First Day.

Monthly sessions facilitated by our new Adult Education Committee provide an exploration of issues that deepen our knowledge and appreciation of Quakerism.

The increased size of our meeting has resulted in the increased size and work of our committees. With more and larger committees, our Nominating Committee must work harder to fill vacancies and find clerks. Workshops and adult education sessions have been held to train Friends for the job of clerking.

Overseers is in the process of creating neighborhood clusters that can be used to stay in contact during times of emergency or natural disaster. The clusters are encouraged to engage with each other socially, as Friends have expressed desire for more opportunities to meet socially during the rest of the week. A regular, morning, midweek meeting continues on the UC Berkeley campus. Some Friends have hosted mid-week, evening meetings in the past year. While participation in Friendly 7's has decreased this year, a mid-week worship sharing group has started to meet and one neighborhood cluster is engaging in weekly Bible study.

The meeting is responding to requests for clearness committees by individuals who carry ministries, some for pastoral care and teaching, and some for peace and environmental protection. We are challenged as we seek appropriate responses to these requests. We are interested in the practices of other meetings to see whether their thoughts, writings, and actions may help us.

In the summer, we celebrated the marriage taken under our care of Dharma Yamaguchi and Manuel Galang with a tender meeting for worship. A joyous reception that followed blossomed with the miracle of a roomful of dancing Quakers.

We comfort each other in time of loss. Last spring, we worshiped in a memorial of Tim Saunders. A vision was shared of Tim in his wheelchair, speeding down the street, and then taking off and flying across the Golden Gate. That vision was translated into a lovely painting.

Another memorial meeting was held this past winter for Strawberry Creek Friends who lost loved ones outside of our meeting community. The grieving Friends brought pictures and other mementos of those who have passed on.

Nurturing the young people among us

Our First Day School is warmly appreciated with parents remarking how much their children love to attend. Approximately 35 young people regularly participate in the First Day School program. For volunteers, it is an opportunity to connect with our young people, and, as a result, form a stronger bond to Strawberry Creek Meeting.

Our First Day School Program has expanded from three classes to four. Our teenage group attends the first fifteen minutes of the meeting for worship and the full hour once a month. They have facilitated two religious education sessions in the past year. We rejoice that a number of our young Friends will be attending the World Gathering in London this summer.

Still, many of our young Friends find it difficult to stay connected to our meeting community. Some have left to attend school in other states. Young Friends are finding it difficult to afford to live in the Bay Area, one of the most expensive places to live in the country.

Challenges to our Community

Chronic lateness of a significant percentage of our worshipers impedes our ability to enjoy a truly gathered meeting. The issue of lateness may be a manifestation of our hurried lives and our failure to make our spiritual lives and community a priority.

The ringing of cell phones and beepers continue to be a disruption to our silence. The acoustics of our meeting room present a challenge to Friends with hearing difficulties, as we are frequently asked to speak up in order to be heard.

A number of Friends are the only members of their family that attend and feel a loss that they are unable to share this aspect of their spiritual lives with their family members. For these Friends, it is particularly difficult to schedule meeting activities around other family obligations.

We are still learning how to use the new medium of the Internet in ways consistent with Quaker values. Our web group on Yahoo has over 100 participants. Some Friends have privacy concerns over the registration process. Conflicts have arisen over the appropriateness of postings. The Electronic Communication and Resources Subcommittee of Overseers Committee was created "to facilitate Friends' use of computer technologies to deepen our spiritual and community life." The subcommittee is working to resolve these issues.

Money issues affect our community in a number of ways. Our sharing fund has received an increased number of requests for assistance. Some of us are experiencing long periods of unemployment. We seek clarity on money issues as we debate the appropriateness of buying our own meeting house.

Addressing challenges in the world

Moral values in government was identified as a major issue in the last election. We reaffirm our commitment to the moral values of love, charity, and compassion which we hold in common with the followers of many faiths. Our commitment to the Peace Testimony has led Strawberry Creek Friends to the gates of Lawrence Livermore Laboratory, to the nuclear testing grounds of the Nevada desert, and to demonstrations against the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. We were a co-sponsor of the AFSC's Eyes Wide Open exhibit, showing the human cost of war, during its display in San Francisco. We donated clothing to AFSC's Emergency Material Assistance Program.

A dozen of us traveled to other states during the last presidential election. We registered voters and assisted citizens to exercise their right to vote, free of fear and intimidation.

Friends have spoken out on the editorial pages of our newspapers. We have campaigned for affordable health care for all. We are concerned that our country's budget priorities have increased inequality between the rich and the poor. We are disturbed when political leaders attempt to increase their power by using hatred and fear to divide us as a country and devalue our families.

Though as individuals we are very active in the wider community, we have not yet discerned a corporate witness for our meeting. Recognizing that the last election brought people together across many differences, we do not want to lose the opportunity to work with others to forward our vision of a just and loving world.

That corporate witness may be found in our concern for the environment. We continue to consider our impact on the Earth and our relationship with Nature. At the close of the last year, Nature again showed us her awesome power and reminded us of how our lives are bound together on this fragile planet. Again, we reach out to victims of disaster, both natural and manmade.

We continue to charge ourselves one dime for each gallon of petroleum we burn to remind us of how our use of these resources may sow the seeds of war. So far, our fund has purchased compact fluorescent light bulbs to replace the conventional bulbs in our homes. We seek other ways to use this fund to decrease our dependence on oil. We have considered how we use fuel for travel, both in our personal lives and on Quaker business. Individual Strawberry Creek Friends have shared information on energy conservation, installed solar panels on our roofs, and purchased vehicles that use little or no gasoline. A new subcommittee of Peace and Social Witness is the Ecology Subcommittee, reflecting our increased awareness and commitment to these issues.

As we come terms with our size as a large meeting, we work to retain what we value: the warmth, the connectedness, and those precious moments when we experience the divine among us.

STRAWBERRY CREEK MONTHLY MEETING

STATE OF THE MEETING REPORT May 2003- May 2004

Worship and the Life of the Spirit

Strawberry Creek Meeting has experienced growth and deepening of the life of the spirit over the past year. A sense of unity infuses diverse approaches to the life of the spirit. Meetings for Worship draw the Strawberry Creek community into a deep silence within which the spirit moves and guides. The silence has been rich and profound as the Meeting endeavors to enhance the spiritual growth of all members and attenders. From this silence, vocal ministry has been thoughtful and spirit-led. Some Friends gather in silence before the beginning of Meeting for Worship which draws those arriving into a living silence. Most Friends arrive before the hour set for Meeting for Worship. The number of late arrivals at Meeting for Worship continues to be a problem which Worship and Ministry is addressing.

Members are aware that the Meeting has become larger and an effort is made to retain the warmth and intimacy of worship in smaller groups. There is a mid-week Meeting for Worship held before work on the U.C. Berkeley campus for those who wish to meet for worship more frequently. At times small numbers of Friends have met for worship at the home of house-bound Friends or for a Meeting for Healing. Meetings for Worship end with people saying their names and making brief announcements of events of interest. This practice makes the members and attenders known to each other in a pragmatic yet spiritual way.

The Meeting, a Guide and Source of Strength

Strawberry Creek Meeting seeks to nurture the spiritual growth of all members and attenders in several ways. Friends gathered in Meeting for Worship are frequently asked to "hold someone in the Light" during a time of difficulty. Those receiving the loving attention of the Meeting in this way often remark how they have felt lifted and enveloped by the Spirit. Spiritual growth is also nurtured by a consideration of the Queries. A different Query is read each month at the beginning of Meeting for Worship when the children are present. Additionally, before rise of meeting for worship, those new to Quaker beliefs and practice are invited to ask questions of members of Worship and Ministry over coffee. Adult education programs include "Quakerism 101", which covers topics in Quaker faith and practice, and study of selected books of the Bible. A committee independent of Worship and Ministry will oversee the adult education program beginning next year. Worship and Ministry also sponsors topical programs after rise of Meeting. In an effort to better use our library resources, a new Library Committee has been set up to consider how to address the problems facing the library. Strawberry Creek Meeting held a weekend retreat at Quaker Center in the spring and a one-day retreat in the fall. The longer retreat provided an opportunity for prayer, worship, Quaker dialogue, and participation in interest groups and creative activities. The day-long retreat presented an opportunity to consider the Meeting as a spiritual home. Friends came away from both retreats with their spirits refreshed. Friends from Strawberry Creek Meeting also participated in worship

and other activities at Quarterly Meeting and Pacific Yearly Meeting. The young adult friends at Strawberry Creek Meeting join with others from Berkeley Meeting and Friends Church to meet for fellowship at regular pot-luck meals and other activities. Some Friends are concerned that several members and attenders have been forced to leave the Bay Area because of the high cost of living.

Nurturing Growth in the Meeting for Those of Different Ages

The spirits of the children are nurtured by limited participation in Meeting for Worship and through the program of the First Day School. There were 41 children regularly attending First Day School: 11 in the Teen group; 20 in the Primary group; and 10 in the Nursery group. Primary age children join the first fifteen minutes of Meeting for Worship on First Day once a month. The Teens regularly attend Meeting for Worship for the first quarter hour and some stay for the entire hour. Some primary students and teens rejoin the meeting at the end of worship for introductions and announcements. Even the tiniest are named. This practice is a way of recognizing the young people as part of the Meeting community and making them at home in it. The First Day School depends on the efforts of many dedicated volunteers. The Teen group continues to nurture its members and engage their interest. The primary age children are following a three-year curriculum. A program beyond child care for the pre-primary group has begun, while infants and toddlers will continue to receive child care appropriate to their age.

Welcoming and Educating Newcomers

The Meeting continues to work on better ways to reach out to new attenders. Worship and Ministry has prepared a brochure for the information of those unfamiliar with Quaker beliefs and practice. A special effort is made to include interested attenders in Friendly 7's and retreats, where they can get to know older members and learn more about the faith and practice of Friends. Overseers hold a New Attenders Brunch twice a year. There is a growing diversity in the make-up of the meeting community which members feel is in keeping with the spirit of Friends. Contact is maintained within the Meeting community the old-fashioned way through the newsletter, the meeting directory, and the photograph register—which is posted on the bulletin board during meeting so that Friends can put names and faces together. The Meeting's website and Yahoo/group provide a means of agile communication during the week.

Bearing Witness to the Testimonies of Friends

Strawberry Creek Meeting continues to bear witness to the testimonies of Friends. A number of Friends have participated in peace activities: protests against war in Iraq and Afghanistan, demonstrations at Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory, and in lobbying on legislation through the Friends Committee on National Legislation. Others continue to work quietly through local institutions for those less fortunate. The Meeting was enriched this past year by the witness of a sojourning Friend who had provided medical care for peace communities in Colombia. The Meeting continues to search for and discern a form of corporate witness. There are different points of view between those who feel that corporate witness must arise without formal thought or preparation and those who feel it deserves nurture and encouragement through reading, listening meetings, and small group Quaker dialogue to open hearts to the possibility. The recent civil marriages of several same-sex

couples are a cause for rejoicing in the Meeting. They reflect Strawberry Creek's witness to the testimony on equality and the Meeting's minute on same-sex marriage.

Relations with the Natural World

Quaker concern for a right relationship with the environment has been brought to the Meeting by Peace and Social Witness Committee, two interest groups known as the Ecoberries and Fireflies, and by individuals. A new program to limit wasteful use of natural resources is just getting under way. The Meeting has approved a minute encouraging members and attenders to donate the equivalent of ten cents per gallon of gasoline used and equivalent donations for direct use of other types of fossil fuels. The donations will be collected in a special fund as a testimony for peace and the advice on harmony with creation. The Peace and Social Witness committee is coordinating a process for deciding how to spend the fund.

Changes in Membership

Strawberry Creek Meeting had 90 members in 2003, a net increase of five members. Attendance at Meeting for Worship is between 90 and 112. Sadly, several valued, long-term members have moved out of the area. More happily, a number of long-time attenders have become members, a reflection of the spiritual growth of the Meeting. Several young adult Friends moved away and three new babies and a toddler were welcomed into the Meeting.

Facing Problems and Discerning a Way

Strawberry Creek Meeting has actively sought to address the issues of growth and increasing complexity, as well as the challenges of the meeting environment. One is an effort to discern the nature of the meeting and its present and future needs. Several listening meetings have been held to assist in this process. The Meeting community is coming to recognize the loving care extended to each member and its extension in various ways toward the larger community. Unity has not yet been found but the Meeting community has come to appreciate members' different points of view. Friends who have had difficulties hearing spoken ministry have found sitting closer to the center of the Meeting room to be helpful. With the increased number of committees, Nominating Committee has found it more difficult to find people willing to serve as clerks. The Meeting has responded by holding workshops on clerking.

Space and Responsibility

Another area which the Meeting is attempting to discern is its relationship with the space it occupies. After several Listening Meetings, a special Site Analysis Committee was set up to bring to the Meeting a review of its needs and options. The Meeting must still discern whether and how different kinds of space or a permanent site might enhance the life of the meeting. The members of the Meeting community are listening to each other and seeking a positive conclusion of this process for the Meeting, whatever that conclusion may be.

Patricia Netherly
Mary White
Tom Yamaguchi
April 11, 2004

Strawberry Creek Meeting
State of the Meeting Report: May 2002 – May 2003

About 40 of the 90 or more people who typically fill our meetings for worship met for a listening meeting to contribute to this report. In addition, the writing committee has spoken with committee clerks and others, and reviewed minutes, newsletters, and special reports of the past year.

As we approach the end of our second year at Berkeley Alternative High School, we come to Meeting under the ominous shadow of our country's wars and threats of war. To us, the *roots* of these wars are only too easily identified. Fears and apprehensions have been intensified by our national Administration's war-making posture. Friends have said they sometimes experienced the turmoil of the outside world reflected within the Meeting. During the fall, some Friends experienced some Meetings for Worship as disruptive or lacking in spiritual depth. Worship and Ministry Committee prepared and distributed a guide to the Meeting for Worship; thereafter, worship became more centered, with more time between spoken ministry. Following a suggestion by Worship and Ministry, many Friends have been sitting in worship beginning 10 to 20 minutes early, so that Meeting has been well gathered by 10 am. And so we have turned again to quiet worship, the wellspring from which we are restored and led, each of us, toward a longing for life based in harmony with all that takes away the occasion for war.

We have been prompted in numerous ways to seek and to ask each other how we can work toward peace. Our spring weekend at Quaker Center and our fall day retreat – times of joyous community – moved us to envision what actions can come from our *faith*, and how we can better practice our convictions. At times we have queried each other, "What *are* our convictions? What are the roots of our religion? What are we ready to do, and how can we support each other in living this out?"

Evidence of such questions and movements of the Spirit has drawn many seekers into the meeting's fellowship this year. We regularly worship in company with nearly 100 members and attenders. The Meeting now has 87 members (though about 35 are inactive or live elsewhere), and 40-50 active attenders. We welcomed three new members and mourned the loss of one long-time Strawberry. Many new attenders speak of being warmly welcomed, and Friends express appreciation for the strong fellowship and caring community of Strawberry Creek Meeting. We are glad for a new surge of energy, talent and curiosity about Quakers. Friends who have experienced smaller Meetings sometimes miss their more intimate dynamics. We started a photo directory to recognize one another better. We search for ways to belong and to be known.

Small groups have been evolving naturally, and these groups are helping us to share interests and time together. Often they meet independently of Strawberry Creek's formal committees but contribute their insights and open their activities to the wider Meeting. A social action group, a parenting group, and an ecology group are now in their 2nd, 3rd and 4th years, respectively, and continue to attract new participants. A biweekly social action calendar is published by e-mail, the dedicated effort of one or two people. A meeting for worship through singing continues monthly. A film series has just started. An on-line web group serves Strawberries both in town and "Scattered." These developments have helped us address our desire for intimacy in the larger Meeting.

Education for our growing Meeting has been an important consideration over the year. A series of adult education meetings on selected topics in *Faith and Practice* (Pacific Yearly Meeting, 2001) offered time to think more deeply about worship, spoken ministry, and pastoral care during life transitions. This spring a round of Quakerism 101 was held and a reading group is getting underway. Each will provide opportunities for new attenders and seasoned Friends alike to explore Quaker faith and practice, both roots and contemporary significance.

Participation in Quarterly and Yearly Meetings has increased, too. Strawberries hold positions in each. We are increasingly conscious of our connections with Quakers across the country, and observe that 8-10 Strawberries regularly attend Friends General Conference. Several young people are attending Quaker schools.

Young adults comprise a large and valued population in the Meeting. Young Adult Friends have been drawing their community from Strawberry Creek, Berkeley Friends Meeting, Berkeley Friends Church, Davis Meeting, and San Francisco Meeting for potlucks and conversation. Other adults in Strawberry Creek are frequently participants in clearness efforts to consider life changes that come especially in younger adult years - job choices, resuming or completing education, clearness about personal leadings and marriage. All of us have grown, or have been given opportunities for growth, in practices of prayer, clearness, Quaker decision-making and true fellowship.

Friendly 7's, arranged by Hospitality Committee, have met three times this year at Friends' homes in four or five groups of six to nine Strawberries for simple supper and dialog on questions

provided by Worship and Ministry committee. A yearning for more worship time resulted in midweek evening meeting for several months during the fall, borrowing space from Berkeley Friends Meeting. A new experiment with early morning worship has begun weekly on the Cal campus, arranged by several Strawberries.

First Day School is the largest ongoing activity conducted by the Meeting, apart from meeting for worship itself. We see 40-50 children and young people coming, with over 30 attending regularly. We anticipate several new-baby welcomings soon. Nearly 30 adults from Meeting serve on First Day School committee or as teachers and workers in our classes. Under gifted guidance our children grow in community with the Meeting, practice quiet together, and join worship monthly for the first 15 minutes when the Advices and Queries are read. The larger size of the meeting, together with dedicated adult energy, has made a thriving First Day School program viable. Teens often stay the full hour of worship, and are carrying on discussion of the experience of worship and of how testimonies are formed. Teens also provided our Christmas play this year, involving many younger children in the drama. Our children have made the Heifer Project an integral part of their craft work and have raised many hundreds of dollars. They have met in Quaker fashion to decide how to contribute these funds to the Heifer Project's provision of farm animals and trees to families in need around the world. A genuine sense of their own community has developed among the children as well as the teens.

As renters of the Alternative High School for only 4-5 hours on Sunday mornings, we have looked for some meaningful connection with the school, and have formed an interest in supporting programs and awards, guided by advice from the very dedicated school principal. We financed the purchase of T-shirts, with student-created graphic design, that were given as awards at a recognition ceremony last June. This year we have provided funds to support a tutoring program. Several Strawberries have been trained and have taken part as tutors in the school district.

The field of peace activities has been broad. We have written personal letters, visited elected officials, and given greater attention to FCNL's (Friends Committee on National Legislation) reports and recommended actions. Peace and Social Concerns committee has been promoting an active letter-writing campaign at Meeting. The committee held a thoughtful Peace Forum, which identified how we value small affinity groups for personal discernment and connection with each other. Collectively many have joined in large peace marches in San Francisco and Oakland, carrying our banner, "Let us try what love can do – Quakers." We experimented: one of us has helped plan worship and civil disobedience at Livermore Lab; others have joined in public witness

there and in numerous other places. One member traveled among peace communities in Colombia with the support of Quarterly Meeting. Another held several house meetings in which individuals were invited to share their personal understandings of the Peace Testimony. A forum in March extended this discussion among the local Quaker communities. Our active web group has allowed us to circulate articles and announcements pertinent to peace interests as well.

Strawberry Creek gave major attention over the year to questions about a stable, long-term location for the Meeting. Last spring's four listening meetings convened by Overseers Committee led to their report recommending exploration of practicalities and factual information necessary to any future decision. The report also encouraged the Meeting "to continue discussing, dreaming, and visioning the future of our community, what it is, and what it might become." An Ad hoc committee arranged several more listening meetings, resulting in a proposal approved by the Meeting to establish a Site Analysis committee this year. Friends have indicated a strong interest in thoughtful examination of our future community, especially to see how our long-range plans affect considerations of site. For the time being, we have referred these longer-range aspects to Worship and Ministry and to Overseers.

Week after week, now in our twenty-fourth year as a Meeting, worshiping together gathers our lives into vital centering, where we become willing to hear the Spirit through spoken and unspoken ministry. We know the fruits of this Spirit through our bonds of care, provision when we are in need, strength of friendships, challenges to one another, and the flow of personal practices that teach us how we may live in spiritual community. Knowing a little, we desire more. Acknowledging our insufficiencies and mistakes in a spirit of humility, we also cherish an enduring hope to make our contribution toward a world of justice and equality.

Our listening and speaking with a sense that the Divine Spirit moves in our midst has been renewed. Once again in the writing of this report we give thanks for the many-faceted experiences of living in our Strawberry Creek community.

Charlie Blanchard
Andrea English
Barbara Graves
4-13-03

SCFM STATE OF THE MEETING REPORT 2001

In reflecting on this past year, we are filled with gratitude for the vitality of Strawberry Creek Meeting. We cherish our worship, with its ample and fertile silence and tender messages. The enriching presence of many new Friends in our meeting brings us much joy. Friends report a warm satisfaction in being a part of the meeting community and participating in its committees and informal groups.

In the course of this review, we have become sensitive to the question of who we are beyond a mutually caring faith community. How well do we teach and hold our living tradition? How do we communicate our experience to the larger world? How deeply do we challenge ourselves to maintain our Quaker integrity? In regard to this last, we note especially the need to strengthen our corporate witness as a faith community, a need that is easily overlooked when so many of our members are personally active in work for social change.

Three specific areas call us this year to reflect, and eventually, to act:

Size. Our membership has grown. In 2001, we welcomed 8 people into membership. We now have a strong group of young Friends 18-39, though there is a decline in the numbers of young children moving up through First Day School. Generally, between 80 and 90 people attend meeting for worship. We are developing new leadership and spreading the work among more Friends. We are conscious of the need to maintain community as we grow in numbers.

Space. We have begun a process of discernment on the future of our meeting site prompted in part by the increased size of our meeting, but also by our chronic insecurity as tenants. We have moved several times in recent years and, although we have adapted to each new location, each move has taken time and energy from the meeting. We desire stability but also wonder whether there are benefits to being an itinerant meeting. A decision about the next site will be a major test for us. We are sensitive to the importance of maintaining unity as we face the challenges of growth and change, and of the need for careful discernment about who we are as a Meeting. *How should these concerns define the space we choose as we move into the future?*

Faith in Action. Although we have a sense of ourselves as a faith community, we feel unsure of how to put our faith into action in the world, and we acknowledge our commitment to be Spirit-led. Britain Yearly Meeting's document, *Faith in Action*, invites us to reflect on the query, *What do the testimonies ask of us at this time?* Answering this could be painful, and reveal things we do not understand. We seek to address the challenge of our testimonies, to become clearer on the nature of our witness to the world, and to take our leadings to the wider community of Friends. The strength of any collective social witness must spring from the bond of our spiritual community.

Now we turn to our worship together this past year, the nurturing of our children in First Day School, and the building of our faith community:

Worship. The quality of our meeting for worship has matured and deepened. The quickness of our many newcomers to grasp the timbre of our worship has astonished us. But we acknowledge our hunger for challenging ministry.

Some Friends regularly arrive several minutes before 10 a.m. to start the process of gathering the Meeting for Worship. It is our hope that the more closely gathered worship will better accommodate the disturbance of Friends who continue to arrive after 10 o'clock. In good Quaker fashion, we encourage community responsibility for the conditions that best nourish deep worship, and also warmly welcome all Friends, whenever they arrive.

The new Faith and Practice is the focus of a monthly series of discussions designed to focus our corporate reflection and ground us in our living tradition. After each program, a smaller follow-up gathering meets midweek in one another's homes.

First Day School. Our annual FDS Christmas play, written this year by the teen group and performed by all of the children, linked the story of the birth of the Christ child with the issue of homelessness. This very moving program showed a high degree of caring and attention, and talented creativity, from a number of Friends.

The teen group finds that a series of worship-sharing nights with pizza in one another's homes provide an opportunity for both spiritual growth and comfortable socializing. Some of our young Friends have recently felt led to speak in the larger community about the peace testimony in public meetings in the Bay Area and on NPR. There is an active group of college students and older teens who eagerly return to meeting when they are in town. The young adult Friends group is also strong.

A high proportion of the meeting community contributes to maintaining our flourishing First Day School, including a few Friends who are not parents themselves who have taken the initiative to become involved with First Day School. More would be welcome. First Day School teachers are reflecting on ways in which even greater meeting-wide attention to the spiritual growth of the children in our meeting might be encouraged.

Building Our Faith Community. The health and high functioning of the meeting showed in the quick and healing response made to 9/11 by the First Day School, and then also by the meeting as a whole. The First Day School curriculum was set aside for two weeks while the children's concerns were listened to. We held two gathered meetings for worship with the other two Friends' Meetings in Berkeley, the first on September 12th, the second about 6 weeks later. Adults also shared in weekly listening meetings, as we pondered the meaning of what had happened, and our need for community insight and support. Although there was little silence in the meetings for worship immediately following 9/11, verbal ministry remained consistently inspiring. After the fall retreat, where the topic of the peace testimony provided an opportunity for much-needed reflection, our meeting's usual reverence for the power of silence returned.

Our community has become more vibrant with the many interest groups that have sprung up in our meeting; they provide a leavening and are significant in our lives. Concerns are as diverse as the environment and parenting. Some have emerged spontaneously, and some grew from our

spring retreat. One group came to know each other while cycling to PYM. "Friendly Sevens" continues to be an important activity. Our meeting now has a website, a list-serve discussion group, and an electronic bulletin board that connect us even when we are separated by distance. Friends report that these tools have helped them feel attached to our meeting community.

Although we sometimes complain about the length of the announcement period after meeting for worship, we recognize that announcements provide opportunities for us to put our faith into action. Announcements provide glimpses of the work of individual Friends and help us connect with one another.

Business meetings are reasonably well attended, although some Friends leave before the meetings conclude. A strong Strawberry presence has been noted at both Quarterly Meeting and PYM.

Friends in our meeting are attentive and caring toward one another and to the needs of the meeting, creating a thread of continuity that is firm and long. While our care for Friends with acute physical illness and those who ask for a clearness committee is good, we feel the need to be sensitive to the needs of those who are unemployed, those who have chronic illnesses, and those who do not ask for help. Now that we are a large meeting, we are more challenged to respond consistently with appropriate caring and sharing.

The query *How does truth fare among us?* offers a special challenge for us today. We sense, both as a meeting and as a Society, that we should be powerful witnesses to much that needs to change. While we have yet to become truly purposive about this in our meeting, we feel that it could be about to happen.

State of the Meeting Report

Strawberry Creek Monthly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends

5/7/01

After a lengthy process of discerning *whether* to move and *where* to move, we Strawberries were smoothly “transplanted” on October 1, 2000. There had been a feeling that we had outgrown our old location because the worship room, which was used as a kindergarten during the week and had a very active primary school spirit, was visually distracting and could no longer comfortably hold our growing numbers. Furthermore, the bathrooms and some of the First Day School rooms were not wheelchair-accessible, and conversion of the room from kindergarten to meetinghouse and back again was a minor miracle, accomplished weekly by our hard-working Facilities Committee. Our Site Committee did an extensive search and considered a number of sites before presenting its recommendation of Crowden School. After careful planning, a trial Meeting for Worship was held at Crowden in March, 2000. At our Meeting for Business on September 10th we approved a minute to relocate to Crowden School. We held our first meetings for worship and business on October 1st. After several weeks of experimenting with using various rooms for our purposes we seemed to settle in comfortably.

There seems to be an overall good feeling about the move. Crowden generally satisfies our desire for a quieter, more spacious location. Also, all of the spaces we use are wheelchair-accessible, with the exception of a room in which the teens sometimes meet. On the other hand, our rent has doubled, and we are paying attention to the effects on our individual and Meeting budgets. And because our current rental agreement will expire in October of 2001, one of our strongest concerns as a Meeting continues to be about ourselves—about our location.

One similarity between our old and new locations is that both buildings are located on major thoroughfares, but that our Meeting room itself is a bit tricky to find, because it is tucked away behind a gate, marked by a sign that is only displayed on First Days. This is a literal problem, and perhaps also a metaphor for our relationship as a Meeting to the world outside our gates. Overall, we are a vital, harmonious community, full of love and concern for each other and creation. Yet too often newcomers feel unwelcomed and questions go unasked or unanswered. And while many individuals and small groups among us are active on peace and social concerns, we do not currently find ourselves called to significant and sustained witness as a Meeting.

Our committees do offer semi-regular service opportunities to which all Strawberries are very much invited. For example, Peace and Social Concerns organizes Games Night with low-income residents of the UA Homes transitional housing facility, and First Day School arranges for Strawberries of various ages to help with a Community Meal at Temple Beth-El. In another expression of concern, we approved a minute regarding Environmental Priorities, which we sent to Friends Committee on National Legislation. Many Strawberries participated in a recent environmental service project at Crissey Field in San Francisco that brought together Friends from several Meetings.

Committees also organize events from time to time which convey our message of welcome more clearly than our day-to-day, Friend-to-Friend encounters sometimes do. In

cooperation with the Hospitality Committee, Overseers organized a new member welcoming in May, 2000, and is planning another one for April, 2001. Overseers also hosted a brunch for about two dozen new attenders in February, 2001. Hospitality organized "Friendly 7s" evenings in April, 2001, and assisted with our Christmas gathering and several farewells to Strawberries heading off on adventures. Ministry and Worship has recently begun to make a few Friends available just after rise of Meeting for "fireside chats" about Quakerism. Loaves and Fishes provided increasingly substantial after-Meeting refreshment. Both our retreats this year had an intergenerational focus. There has also been increasing interest in several small groups which are not sponsored by the Meeting, but which meet in Strawberries' homes to address issues or situations in a Quaker setting.

Friends feel that worship has deepened in our new location. There is no scarcity of either silence or spoken ministry, both of which feel full and spirit-led. Our attendance has grown since the move as well. We are grateful to have the space for so many newcomers. It seems that the surface amenities of the new location have made it possible for more seekers to respond to the pull of our primary activity: worship.

Some Friends feel that the number of late-arriving Friends distracts them and prevents the meeting from becoming gathered. Latecomers, who are between a third and a quarter of the meeting, continue to wait in a separate room to be seated all at once about 15 minutes into meeting.

Adult religious education has been well attended, and there appears to be a great hunger for spirit in our Meeting, and a desire for a better understanding of Friends' tradition. The meeting sold over 80 copies of the revised Faith and Practice. There were five different groups organized to read and study the Faith and Practice revision. We approved and submitted to the Revision Committee a minute regarding the scope and tone of the Advices and Queries on Home and Personal Relationships, and another one deepening the attention paid to Unity with Nature.

Our First Day School program continues to provide religious education and a sense of community to children and their families, and the adults involved with the program. Four classes exist, defined by flexible age-bands: Nursery, Pre-Primary, Upper Primary and Teens. 34 children and teens participated in our First Day School program, 19 of them on a regular basis.

An array of options has opened up for teen involvement in worship, fellowship and service. This has the effect of keeping more teens in touch with Strawberry Creek, even during the periods where school activities, travel and other commitments pull them away from First Day School. Three teens participated regularly in the life of the meeting as childcare providers and teaching assistants. Two teens attended meeting for worship regularly. Four Strawberry teens are involved in preparations for the 2001 Junior Yearly Meeting.

Classes are taught by First Day School Committee members and other adults. Teens serve as the primary childcare providers for the Nursery, with rotating adult assistants. On several occasions, the younger children made crafts and sold them to benefit the Heifer Project which assists hungry families around the world. The Pre-Primary, Upper Primary

and Teen groups participate in silent worship on a regular basis, either in Meeting for Worship or in their First Day School classrooms.

Many of the 20- and 30-somethings among us are involved in the young adult friends group which holds regular potlucks and other activities for people from Strawberry Creek, Berkeley Friends Meeting, Berkeley Friends Church and elsewhere.

During the year we welcomed four new members, and approved one transfer of membership out of the meeting. Our total membership now is 79 and average attendance at meeting is 70-80 members and attenders. At this writing, four applications for new membership and one application for transfer of membership into Strawberry Creek are in process.

Respectfully submitted,

Susan Burr, Clerk