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## Strawberry Creek Monthly Meeting State of the Meeting Report 2018

A sense of Spirit continues to move among us, pushing us to speak in Meeting for Worship, helping us to make decisions in our Meeting for Business, and encouraging us to try new structures. We feel hope for our Meeting, for the way that truth is leading us, and for the community we are building. Some deeply appreciate the Meeting community as we strive to reignite our own connection with the Divine; others feel the presence of God in many ways, including in the children of this Meeting.

~~Meeting and the Clerk~~ hold themselves open to truth. The Meeting is both a refuge and a place of departure -- a refuge from the turmoil of the world and the United States in particular, and a place to figure out how to respond to that turmoil. We have turned toward each other at this difficult time, and this is a joy and an opportunity.

While there is electricity and energy in our meeting, some of it no longer channels through existing structures. The electrical metaphor helps us to understand changes in our Meeting. For example, some of our older, incandescent energy sources are burning out; there are some vibrant new LEDs, but they need new ~~circuits~~ <sup>ways</sup> through which to channel their bright energy.

Nominating continues to have difficulty filling standing committees.. Our new energy seems more open to accomplishing short-term projects -- including a wonderful, spontaneous-feeling fall retreat -- rather than committing to a year on a standing committee. Other examples include setting up a new set of Friendly 7's, worship sharing groups, the Quaker Action Worship Group, support for people in the Caribbean after the hurricanes, and new energy for action, inside and outside of committees. It is vitally important that we both seek and be open to new structures and new ways of connecting.

We are a large Meeting, and some may feel overwhelmed and reluctant to step forward and participate. During the past year a new Welcoming and Inclusion Working Group began implementing better ways to welcome visitors and include new attenders in the life our Meeting. Smaller settings, such as third First Day worship sharing, spiritual sharing groups, and Friendly 7's, help people feel less exposed as they begin to participate. In addition, we need to be mindful of those who feel excluded from various activities.

Another structure that is deeply valued is that Friends with Anchoring Committees have begun to come regularly to Business Meeting to speak about the ministry that is being anchored by Meeting. Meeting dedicates many of our resources to directly supporting individual leadings by providing Anchoring Committees. Meeting for Business is generally well attended and proceeds smoothly. The Oakland Worship Group and two mid-week meetings for worship continue to meet under care of Strawberry Creek Meeting.

Some time ago Oversight was laid down and two committees, Care of the Meeting and Mutual Care, were put in place. We are aware that this change should be studied, knowing that we are still not meeting everyone's needs. Mutual Care strives to help individuals who are struggling while not intruding where there is sensitivity. It is a difficult balance. Our Meeting community is strengthened and enriched by the care members give to each other during times of difficulty.

*Children*

The ~~Children's~~ First Day Program provides a wonderfully bright light to the Meeting; people greatly enjoyed and appreciated their work on and presentation of the Quaker Testimonies. We are also grateful for a large family whose children reliably come to Meeting; this allows the Children's First Day program teachers to plan ahead and to know there will be children to teach. Additional support for and connection with this program is valued and needed. We now save a row of seats for the children, parents and teachers; and during announcements they share with the Meeting what they did during their hour.

The Finance Committee realized this year that a satisfactory review of our Meeting's financial records had not been done for many years and furthermore, that there was no clear audit process to follow. The Committee developed a written process for a Friendly Financial Review, which was completed in June 2017.

Other beginnings and endings include the official laying down of the Site Committee. The committee had been on hiatus for some time, and was officially laid down at Business Meeting. The Berkeley Technology Academy campus has proved to be a good site for our Meeting and we hope that the venue will remain available to us for the foreseeable future.

While Meeting for Worship has generally been deep and centered, our Meeting was deeply saddened and challenged by one attender who spoke out twice during worship about her racist fears. These views did, however, bring a discourse on power, privilege and race into the heart of the Meeting and a small committee was formed to address these issues. The Power, Privilege and Race working group has provided several Adult Ed sessions that have been very well attended. In another response to challenging political times, our Meeting joined BOCA -- Berkeley Organizing Congregations for Action. Our Meeting continues to seek ways to join with like-minded groups and to shine our Light more broadly.

We are fortunate to be located in an area with so many Friends -- two additional meetings in Berkeley and other large meetings close by. A joint committee with representatives from our meeting and Berkeley Friends Meeting has been formed, and shared activities are being planned.

We are beginning to feel joy and energy bubbling back up in the Meeting.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathy Barnhart (clerk) on behalf of Ministry and Worship, Philippa Barron on behalf of members at large, Rick Herbert on behalf of Care of the Meeting Committee