

Strawberry Creek Monthly Meeting State of the Meeting Report 2016

As we reflect on the state of our meeting in 2016, we ask ourselves, “Where’s the enthusiasm? Where’s the juice?” Our search leads us to look both inward and outward as we review how Spirit is manifest in our meeting for worship, our meeting for business, our Strawberry Creek Community, and our witness in the world. In Strawberry Creek Meeting, we find a vibrant, Spirit-led center that sustains us in meeting challenges.

Our meetings for worship are often covered and deep, but we have experienced messages that were not received as Spirit-led ministry. One Friend noted that, on such occasion, her job is to dig deeper and find grounding to hold and contain what comes through; to get to a more Spirit-led place, to open wider when disturbance comes through, to welcome it in. We are happy to find that our vessel is strong enough to hold.

We enjoy the entry of our children as they come and report enthusiastically to us at the close of worship. Many would wish for more of them to be present with us for a while in worship.

Adult Education on vocal ministry was appreciated. We recognize a yearning for more formal religious education in our Meeting.

Our Meetings for Business are well attended, lively, and well ordered. We are inspired by, and have given joyful, reverent attention and commitment to the understanding of clerking and practice in the good order of Friends. The Ben Lomond clerking workshop by Arthur Larabee was very helpful to the ten of us who attended. It led to a more conscious attention to conducting business in the manner of Friends.

Our members and attenders have very busy lives. For many, in addition to their work in the world, much of their time is given to the Meeting’s committee work in standing and ad hoc committees. While Nominating Committee has not found it easy to fill all ten standing committees, we have had no difficulty in creating ad hoc committees to organize retreats and the Twelfth Month celebration.

We are blessed with many anchoring and support committees, and we delight in our mutual care. Our enthusiasm is seen in these activities, especially. One Friend recalled the root of the word enthusiasm—“to be possessed by God.” In this vein, we note easy trusting laughter in our committees that we find joyfully inspirited.

Many among us are active in our spiritual sharing circles. One Friend led a gathering of twenty West Coast mystics for the “*What cans’t thou say?*” program that was attended by ten of our Strawberry Creek Quakers. We had six discernment circles that met to consider the state of the world and our response to it. There is a small group for Gospel singing, meeting in each other’s homes, and bringing the bright light of happiness and worshipfulness.

Our First Day School Children’s Program experienced the loss of committee members. With one new member, and the support of hired helpers, it is now bringing energy and spirit to its work.

We continue to rent space at B-Tech High School in South Berkeley. For years, we have explored the possibility of owning a meetinghouse and have contributed to a fund for a possible purchase. So far, we have not found what we have been looking for, and we have become more

aware of the financial and management burden meetinghouse ownership would bring. For now, we have suspended the search. This has been very painful, especially for those who have worked so hard and for so long in search of a home of our own. We are now challenged to discern how to proceed, not least, with the substantial funds contributed for a purpose now on hold. Without a meetinghouse we are not very visible to our local community. Yet we have a welcome stream of visitors who know to look for us.

Our space situation has been eased by the offer of Berkeley Friends Meeting for us to rent space in their recently renovated meetinghouse on Thursday evenings for our committee meetings and events. There, too, we join with Berkeley Friends in our Wednesday early-morning worship.

The Oakland Worship Group, which is under the care of Strawberry Creek, is now being forced to relocate. Two of our longtime members, who have hosted that meeting on Sunday evenings at their East Oakland home, are moving to Chicago. For now, it is being hosted in a home in the Oakland hills, which is, unfortunately, far from public transit.

We are concerned for our younger Friends and the financial difficulties they face. They are less evident in the Meeting than they once were. We fear that the rising cost of housing is making it more difficult to live in our community resulting in a heart and brain drain. We are aware that those of us who are more settled need to be responsive to their situation. We are truly grateful for a substantial bequest in contribution to our Sharing Fund for support of those in need.

Many among us have been responsive to local needs. We have donated to the Berkeley Food Pantry, Youth Spirit Artworks and other organizations. Three people spent a day helping to clean a homeless camp. One of our First Day School teachers, who lives with Parkinson's disease, held a fundraising concert for research to find a cure for that disease. Our Dime-a-Gallon Dream Fund continues to fund projects that help to reduce our dependence on fossil fuel and keep us aware of our energy use.

Our presence is noted in public events, including demonstrations in support of climate action, the Black Lives Matter movement, and immigration concerns. Two of our members attended the UN Conference on Climate Change (COP) 21 in Paris, one as General Secretary for Quaker Earthcare Witness. We are active in other Quaker organizations, including American Friends Service Committee (AFSC), the Quaker Institute for the Future (QIF), Friends Committee on Legislation California (FCL CA), and Friends Committee on National Legislation (FCNL). This year, fifty of us attended Quarterly and twenty-five attended Yearly Meeting. We are closely connected to, and supportive of, the Woolman Semester, a window on how our Quaker values get lived out in the world.

We recognize the need to remember that we are a living tradition. The world and the Meeting are always changing. We seek the guidance of Spirit in knowing our truth and moving ahead in response to change. We strive to treat each other tenderly and, as we seek the truth and act upon it, we work to touch that of God in each of us.