

State of the Meeting Report

Strawberry Creek Meeting, 2025

At the listening session held for corporate consideration of the life of our Meeting, Friends shared expressions of joy and renewed energy, and of loss and discomfort. We lost many dear friends this year. One Friend reflected, “It feels like we lost things in the pandemic, and we are beginning to see what we have gained. We are finding our way – how to worship together, how to be with each other, how to be part of the whole.”

Gratitude. We were grateful to celebrate a marriage under the care of Strawberry Creek Meeting for the first time in ten years. The reception was lively and filled with folk dancing.

We are grateful for our Mutual Care Committee for keeping an eye on our community and connecting the Meeting to those in need through letters, phone calls, visits, rides, meals, and more. A member of the Committee reflected: “In Strawberry Creek we understand that the Testimony on Community empowers the Committee to activate care from within the community for one another”.

We are grateful to those who provided spiritual and material care to Friends in their final stages of life. Memorial Meetings were held for four beloved members of our community last year, two more are planned. We need to allow time for grieving, and to feel how much it requires of us to hold such losses.

Sunday worship. We treasure worshipping together, both on site and on Zoom. Twice a month we meet in “blended worship” and the rest of the time we meet in “side-by-side” meetings. It isn’t simple. For some, “side-by-side” meetings feel isolating; some experience meeting on Zoom as a blessing; some find having microphones, a camera, and a projector in the meeting room to be challenging. Immense gratitude was expressed for those Friends who make it possible for our whole community to gather, to see and to hear each other in “blended worship”. One Friend expressed gratitude for being able to participate as able and as led, to be listened to when able to speak, and to be in people’s thoughts.

Our practice of lifting-up names at the close of worship to hold in the Light was described by one Friend as creating a web of mutual support and love that is a rich part of their worship experience.

Meeting for Worship on the Occasion of Business. We are grateful to the “front table” Clerks who guide us as we seek what Spirit is calling us to do. A meeting-wide discernment process led to a revised Antiracism Monthly Accountability Practice that we use in Meetings for Business and Committee meetings, to keep Meeting’s work grounded in living into our Minute on Engagement to Uproot and Dismantle Racism in Strawberry Creek Friends Meeting.

Challenges. Inadequacies of our current site, Berkeley Technology Academy (B-Tech),

have become increasingly burdensome, especially the lack of appropriate, welcoming rooms for children and the First Day Children's Program. Meeting approved that the Clerk appoint an ad hoc Site Search Committee and work is proceeding. Way has not yet opened.

Finding Friends to serve on committees continues to be a challenge. We are coming to terms with our current capacities and limitations. We seek new ways to serve the Meeting and stay connected.

Fostering Connections. Across the last year, Friends in committees and individually have made opportunities for sharing worship and fellowship beyond Sunday morning's "worship hour." Traveling Meetings have begun. A "carful" of Friends visits the home or residence of people to worship with those unable to attend Sunday Meeting for Worship at B-Tech. Monthly potlucks at B-Tech have become something many look forward to. A monthly book group that meets in Friends' homes to share a meal and discussion is thriving and growing. The first "in-person" spring retreat since the COVID shutdown took place at Ben Lomond Quaker Center. There were children! Connections in small groups continue to be nurtured in the Oakland Worship Group, a Spiritual Life Sharing Group, and an Elder's Group.

Continuing anti-racism work in the Meeting. We continue to engage with our Minute on Engagement to Uproot and Dismantle Racism in Strawberry Creek Meeting. In the Listening Meeting, we were reminded that the last sentence of the Minute contains two parts: 1) *"We commit equally to the work of dismantling the political and economic structures of racism,"* and 2) *"opening to acceptance of real beauty in human difference."* Many have struggled and worked hard with the first. We need to learn how to be more open to the second. There's a tendency in Quakerism to see the world through a "colonial headset", applying judgments that one Friend of mixed race says has pushed them out to the margins. Hope was expressed that we open to the beauty in human difference and build awareness and joyful appreciation for the spectrum of experience beyond our own.

Individuals have said that reading the antiracism minute aloud and use of the Antiracism Accountability Practice have impacted their life, work and volunteering. More Friends are bringing matters of racial justice into Meeting spaces. Peace, Earthcare, and Social Witness Committee (PESW), with participation from Power, Privilege and Race Subcommittee (PPR), developed adult ed programs including a series on "Retrospective Justice: The California Reparations Report". A Friend reflected that the work of PPR and PESW has been important to their spiritual growth, supporting them in living into Quaker testimonies.

Faith into Practice beyond the Meeting. We are called to put Quaker values and testimonies into practice beyond our Meeting. Strawberry Creek's Community Sharing Fund made significant financial grants to organizations located in and serving East Bay communities of color. We provided financial and volunteer support to the Tiny Home Village and Garden Project in Richmond, co-organized by a member of our meeting. We

supported the Land Transfer of John Woolman School to the “California Heritage: Indigenous Research Project” (CHIRP) and the Nisenan Tribe’s Nevada City Rancheria (NCR), Intertribal Friendship House, Berkeley Youth Alternatives, and Healthy Black Families. Meeting sent letters calling for an end to the war in Gaza and opposing a new police training center in the East Bay city of San Pablo. Members of our Meeting are active in many Quaker organizations including Pacific Yearly Meeting and Friends General Conference. One Friend likened Meeting to an iceberg with a lot going on under the surface. “Seeing the way that love connects us to each other and supports each of us as we do our work in the world, is profound.”

Strawberry Creek Friends seek Spirit’s guidance as we continue to worship and work together in a time of profound changes and challenges.

Susan Burr, Peter D’Angelo, Larry Strain

Date approved: