

Since April 1999, membership increased from 72 to 76 with the addition of three new members and one transfer of membership. We welcomed the presence of many new attenders throughout the year. Our meetings for worship often number between seventy and eighty people now. In February 2000, Overseers hosted the largest annual Newcomers Brunch in recent memory.

We mourned the unexpected death of one long-time attender at the end of March. A very moving memorial service was attended by many Friends and neighbors, who spoke deeply of her service as a neighborhood and community activist.

We continue to seek ways to make the larger community aware of our Friends Meeting and to share our faith. Many new attenders have found us through our continuing advertisement in a local free newspaper. A request for outreach in the form of an e-mail newsletter to an attender now living far away has developed into providing that resource to any in the Meeting who want it. As part of our outreach, we also seek ways to share Quaker witness as a meeting. The Peace and Social Concerns Committee has guided Meeting in a process through which we decided to volunteer in groups with a local non-profit organization providing support to homeless people to become self-sufficient.

A generally high quality of worship has been sustained since our last report. Despite the visual distractions of the schoolroom in which we meet, and the noise of the BART trains rolling by, our worship has frequently been deep and encouraging to growth in our spiritual lives, both individually and collectively. Many people feel an openness to prayer and a sense of a dependable network within meeting where we can expose our struggles and be met with love, compassion and deep listening. Occasionally we have been challenged to respond to worship where silence did not occur between messages, or when individuals who were troubled were reaching out. We are seeking new ways to reach out to those individuals as well as new ways of deepening worship at the same time. Despite these challenges, our worship has retained a depth and source of unity that has carried over to Meetings for Business. Our Meetings have led many to feel that we are "maturing" in the Light.

We have continued to read Advices and Queries monthly at the beginning of Meeting for Worship. Each month one committee prepares a response to the Advices and Queries, which is read out of the opening silence at Business Meeting. This practice grounds the Meeting for Business in worship. We have been able to maintain prayerful listening during Meeting for Business and to think of what is best for the Meeting as a whole.

We remain challenged to welcome those who are new and to strengthen our sense of community.

Many people feel closely connected with Meeting and we continue to care for those who are ill or unable to attend Meeting. We nonetheless are aware that some others have expressed the pain of feeling unwelcomed and unheard. We continue to ask how we make and then deepen connections with those new to Meeting.

The First Day School Program has continued to flourish. In June, certificates of attendance were awarded to 25 children or teens and 3 infants or toddlers. Substantial increases in participation have occurred since fall in the ages 4-7 and teen groups. Some adults feel that the more visible presence of our teens, who had met off site during the past two years, has fostered deeper connections between teens and adults in Meeting this year. A real sense of community has developed among the young people, and for many, participation in the Meeting has become an important part of their lives. Many Friends feel that this participation reflects the significant efforts of the First Day School Committee as it has developed and taught its own curriculum through two complete three-year cycles of lessons.

For over three years, we have been fortunate to rent a large space at the Shelton Primary Education Center, which has been available to us all day every First Day. During this year, two listening meetings were held on the suitability of our present site and a site committee continued to carefully explore options for either relocating or expanding our space at the present site. Many Friends expressed the desire for a plainer meeting room, visually more spacious and quiet, while at the same time Friends appreciated our location and the large space that is currently available for First Day School, adult education, meetings for business, and our social hour after meetings for worship. The site committee's year-long preparatory work was cited by Friends as a good example of the meeting's loving care of one another in seeking unity. Because our meeting rents space but changes location only at long intervals, our moves can be demanding. However, changing locations keeps us aware that we as individuals in our relationship to God and to each other are what make Strawberry Creek Meeting.

Members and attenders share many and varied talents and plain hard work to sustain our community. A member new to nominating committee was "startled and refreshed" to find that people were "waiting to be asked" to participate in committees. Some fruits of committees' work provided us with retreats, adult religious education programs, friendly sevens worship-sharing, and a work and spirituality group. Several Friends have expressed appreciation for prayers and caring support from the meeting during the last year. Hospitality committee reminded us with grace and humor to have fun; we were lifted by activities designed to include children, teens, and adults. There is a cresting of love and concern for each other that develops in Meeting for Worship, which we are attempting to extend after Meeting through the times for announcements, refreshments, and beyond. We seek to relate to each other in that which is Eternal beyond Meeting for Worship and to support each other's spiritual journeys.

State of the Meeting Report- Strawberry Creek Meeting 1999

As we approach our twentieth anniversary as a monthly meeting there is a sense that we have matured. Indeed, when our members and attenders are asked which word best describes our Meeting, the word most often heard is "healthy". Strawberry Creek Monthly meeting now has 72 members with two people released from membership and three people joining. One baby was born this year.

We note a deepening of our understanding and practice of Quaker process. We feel both supported and challenged to grow individually, and to grow together as a community. We continue to seek ways to develop community outside of First day. We have been nurtured and strengthened by our retreat themes, adult education, Friendly Sevens, our annual Posada, and the various events of our hospitality committee. We have added a midweek evening worship meeting. We also celebrated the first same-gender marriage under the care of the Meeting. We realize our successes are not due solely to our own efforts and give thanks for the graces and leadings we have received from the light in whose presence we worship each first day.

At Shelton School we enjoy having our own space on First day and the opportunity for a greater variety of activities after meeting, but some continue to find the meeting space and the noise of BART trains distracting. A site committee is exploring alternatives to our present space.

We meet for worship together at 10 AM on First Days with about 70 members and attenders. Worship has been centered and is drawing new seekers into our quiet gathering. We are nourished by ministry that arises out of silence, comes from different voices in our community, and leaves large spaces of quiet in which we feel the Spirit at work among us. The sense of deep worship has been carrying over into our Meetings for Business.

We seek ways to instill spiritual values in the lives of children, to live out Quaker values in our daily lives, and share these in service to a wider group. Our First-Day School attendance is growing, with a total of 34 children attending fairly regularly. Enhancing the program has brought in more children. The children have met and grown to appreciate adults in our Meeting, beyond their regular teachers, and they have formed a caring peer group with youngsters their own age as they learn about the Quaker traditions of mutual care, peace and witness.

Our Peace and Social Concerns Committee has challenged us to volunteer together. After considering various possibilities, we chose to support BOSS (Building Opportunities for Self Sufficiency) a local organization serving the homeless which has volunteer opportunities for a variety of ages and time commitments. Many in Strawberry Creek continue to contribute their time to PYM and other Quaker organizations.

Another way in which our meeting showed its volunteer spirit was with our children's summer program. When no Friend stepped forward to serve as summer coordinator, Friends were asked to volunteer to serve each week. Enough Friends volunteered to fill out the summer program. We also found a group of volunteers to help fill out the needs of the meeting's Facilities Committee, and to put together our Christmas Posada. This showed us that we were able to respond to our needs beyond strict reliance on our committee structure.

In our maturity we notice ourselves physically aging. We continue to be aware of the need for easier access to our events for both the sensorily and mobility impaired. We also had positive experiences of being asked for help and the gift of being able to help in the support of terminal illness and surgery.

We were further challenged when our presiding clerk had to withdraw from clerkship to care for her terminally-ill husband. Our Nominating Committee could not reach unity on her replacement; the Overseers assumed the responsibility and brought forth the name of our present presiding clerk.

Our past twenty years have helped us lay a foundation for the future. We are not only more tolerant of diversity, but often grateful for it, now that we have developed the ability to translate between one another's styles and perspectives. The ways in which Friends have been tender with one another this past year in addressing and resolving difficult situations as they have arisen show that Truth has advanced among us, and give us confidence our Meeting's foundation of health and maturity shall carry us forward in the next twenty years as Divine Light opens the way.

State of the Meeting Report—Strawberry Creek Meeting 1998

Over the last year, we have seen our Meeting settle and deepen in a way we might not have anticipated in our last report. Although there has been some dissatisfaction with our new Meeting site, we continue to have a committed core of people attending Meeting for Worship. New attenders and long-time members alike note our settled Meetings, including the “improved and deepened” vocal ministry. One member reports that she is “not experiencing contact [with the divine] but [is] somehow satisfied by the seeking.” We have been experimenting with an early Sunday worship group, which has been lightly attended but greatly appreciated by those who gather then. There has been some worry that the two worship times split the community, and we are still waiting to see where the Spirit will lead us on this matter. Fewer conflicts seem to underlie our week-to-week interactions than at this time last year. Meetings for Business have also been improving, with better attendance and more silences to wait on the Light. Complex decisions have been made in a spirit of goodwill and seeking.

We continue to struggle with creating and maintaining our community. Although a successful ad in a local paper brings in many inquiries and visitors, newcomers report that our greeting is not consistent, and people do not feel as welcome as they might. Our committees continue to find new ways to make as many people as possible feel included in the life of the Meeting. Our retreat committee organized two spirit-filled retreats. Hospitality committee holds quarterly “Friendly Sevens” gatherings to give community members a chance to get to know one another in smaller groups. Overseers have been working on ways to introduce new attenders to Quaker traditions, as well as to give prospective members the preparation they need to become part of the community.

The challenges posed by the sickness and death of two dear members of our meeting showed us at our best and brought us close together. We have been admonished by a Friend not to wait until someone is dying to be a caring and loving community. The bedrock of Quaker Community is Love among us, which leads us to notice the condition of those among us and act. Regular attenders have reported feeling lost or neglected in our large Meeting. How ready are we to reach out to meet less urgent or apparent needs?

We have had 3 births, joyous occurrences for us. Our new site has provided increased space and freedom for our First-Day School Program. There are fewer children in the Meeting than formerly; the largest group is now of high-school age. These young attenders have joined with Berkeley Friends’ Meeting for a very successful teen program. We have struggled with questions of what should be included in our curriculum, and our First Day School Committee and Meeting community have risen to the occasion by calling Meetings for Listening for parents and the broader community. We continue to wait and watch for leadings in this area. Our adult education program, by contrast, has gotten livelier and more consistent, with good community attendance and people requesting more opportunities for study and worship.

Sadly, our outreach to the community around us has been disappointing to many who wanted to create bridges to our multicultural neighborhood and community. We are worried that racism is an issue, and we continue to struggle to know how gracefully and purposefully to show our neighbors that we want to include them. At the same time, our Peace and Social Order committee has been addressing issues relevant to the wider community, such as the Berkeley Police Department's use of pepper spray on residents. They have also been exploring welfare reform issues. Addressing national and worldwide concerns, our members continue to serve on FCL, AFSC, and other organizations promoting social action.

Our experiences with difficult decisions such as Meeting times and curriculum have required careful attention to many points of view. Our Meetings for Listening have been of great service, and Way has opened for us, above all, through a willingness to experiment and watch where the Light leads us. We have rejoiced in the coalescing of our Meeting community through all the changes, losses, and Love gracing us. We have welcomed 6 new members this year, giving us pause to reflect that, though we are often critical of our own performance, our attenders continue to seek membership and deeper commitment to the community.

Strawberry Creek Monthly Meeting is composed of 71 members and about 30 regular attenders. We released one member this year. Other relevant statistics are included in the body of this report.

STRAWBERRY CREEK MEETING
STATE OF THE MEETING REPORT
APRIL, 1997

As we prepare this report we are reminded that it is an occasion for us to ask ourselves how well we are living the faith that we profess, how conscientiously we are guided by our Advices and Queries.

The major event of our year was the move from Berkeley Friends Church to Shelton's Primary Education Center. This had us engrossed in the process of making a decision to move, the actual move, settling in to the new place and beginning to become neighbors in our new neighborhood. Each of these aspects of the move provided occasion for challenge and growth.

MEMBERSHIP AND ATTENDANCE

Strawberry Creek Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends has seventy-one adult members. At the time of writing, six requests for admission into membership are in the process of clearness or seasoning.

Attendance at Meeting for Worship is about sixty on Sunday mornings, with twelve to twenty adults attending worship at nine o'clock and thirty-five to forty adults attending at 10.30 (including First Day School teachers).

WORSHIP AND MINISTRY — THE SPIRITUAL HEALTH OF THE MEETING

The spiritual health of the meeting is reflected in the way its members center their lives in the meeting for worship and from that center undertake the business of the meeting, maintain their living tradition, care for one another and express their ministry in the wider world. From these several perspectives the meeting is robust and healthy though we see areas where there is need for attention and continued learning.

The move to Shelton's School allowed us to structure our time together in a new way. Worship and Ministry assumed the task of exploring content and form for our First Days and recommended that, for a trial period, Meeting for Worship be held at 10:30 a.m. With the building available, this allowed for earlier activities including a, now regular, additional earlier meeting at 9:00 a.m. Combined attendance seems to have been sustained though we are carefully watching the effects on our community of having two First Day meetings and we will review this in due course.

Although the quality of spoken ministry has been uneven, there is an overall quality of sincerity and, on occasion, ministry has been received as extraordinarily penetrating and spirited. We commonly experience long periods of gathered silent worship. Not long after our move the quality of spoken ministry contributed to our feeling that we had finally settled.

While there were concerns that the preschool classroom environment, not to speak of the recurrent passing of BART trains, might detract from our worship experience, in general, people have found our new home conducive to a gathered meeting. Indeed, some members have found the new site — the light, the caring environment -- inspiring. Even the noise of the BART trains has been received as a call to deeper centering.

We continue to exhort ourselves to come to meeting with heart and mind prepared. There are still latecomers but this is now managed routinely and their arrival is less disturbing than in our former meeting place. Friends seem also to be both more focused in worship and more accepting towards

latecomers than before. However, we continue to ask to what extent the number of latecomers is a sign that we have not all internalized our understanding of the nature of our silent meetings and the demands it makes of us.

THE LIFE OF THE MEETING

While we have had satisfying experiences observing Quaker process and good order, we have also cause for concern that we have not been able consistently to achieve this. Without question, the need to move to a new place of worship made demands on us as a community and tested our ability to hold together in love and unity. Overall, however, we seem to have risen to the test and to have emerged stronger as a result. The fact that three of our community stood aside in our decision to move is seen as evidence of our process working rather than of its breaking down. Certainly, much care was given to the concerns of those who felt burdened by the move and, in the end, unity was maintained.

We have cause for satisfaction over the process by which we redesigned our program of First Day activities. Our Committee on Worship and Ministry invited everybody's views and prepared recommendations which seemed best to meet members' different needs. Members accepted the Committee's judgment without the need for reworking its decisions or for detailed explanations of how these were made, a major achievement reflecting Worship and Ministry's preparation and the meeting's careful response.

Such has not been the case with all the meeting's decision processes. We aspire to greater openness, clear speech and personal responsibility in our meeting, as well as the ability of each of us to balance our personal needs and our concern for the good of the meeting as a whole. We also value appropriate confidentiality and we especially aspire to the greater trust that this requires. Some Friends see the contemporary demand for public transparency to have increased sensitivities to these issues. We have been reminded that we each bring imperfections to the meeting, that we need to be tender with one another, that we need to remain open to the light, and that what we are about is working together to discern God's will.

While mindful of things that should concern us, we can report a high level of effective activity. The work of the meeting is getting done and none of the committees is seriously troubled. The Committee on Peace and Social Order has been notably active and it is testimony to the depth of leadership in the meeting that this has been in spite of the loss of its co-clerk.

Strawberries have been active in the wider Quaker community. More than twenty of us participated in Pacific Yearly Meeting. We sent a copy of our 1992 minute on same gender marriage to PYM, which was posted as part of PYM's discussion and adoption of a minute on equality of marriage rights. We were also well represented at Quarterly Meeting, and we sent representatives to a training session on sexual harassment as an issue within Quaker meetings.

In various ways we maintain our living tradition. Continuing reflection on our process, a review of committee functions, meetings on clerking – both for clerks and for members generally – are helpful in grounding us in our tradition. There is an openness to learning and the meeting has engaged in the Yearly Meeting reviews of Advices and Queries. The preparation of this State of the Meeting Report has been, and is now regularly, the occasion for drawing upon our collective reflection as well as upon inputs from committee clerks and individuals and Meeting records.

Our Committee on Oversight has prepared Advices and Queries on pastoral care for overseers. These are intended to make clear to all members the pastoral role of overseers and to set the standard to which overseers are to be held accountable.

A committee on re-structuring recommended that Nominating Committee review the working needs of committees and that individuals be given job descriptions and clear understanding of the nature of the

commitment they undertake when accepting nomination to a committee. As a result of these recommendations, the meeting is now reviewing the functions and work loads of all committees.

In the course of these reviews, we are being led to consider whether we are doing more than needs to be done or more than we as a body, as committees and as individuals can accomplish. We are reminded of the need to season our sense of what needs to be done in the wisdom of the light within us.

Adult Education

We completed "Quakerism 102", an introduction -- or re-introduction -- to the basics of Quakerism, in the spring of 1996.

While Worship and Ministry was occupied with the move and structuring the program of activities for First Day, the Committee on Peace and Social Order assumed the task of continuing education. In the Fall, addressing racial intolerance, they presented a screening and discussion of the film "Skin Deep." Current plans include presenting the 5-week course "Overcoming the Dominator Model in Building Peaceful Relationships" developed and taught by Friend Bill Moyer of San Francisco.

In January, being no longer preoccupied with the move and with First Day arrangements, the Committee on Worship and Ministry was able to turn its attention again to the subject of Adult Education. A program was developed featuring topics chosen in response to concerns brought by individuals to the committee. To date, these have covered: "Speaking Out of the Silence" led by Eric Moon and "Quaker Ritual and Personal Ritual" led by Paul Mackinney from Berkeley Friends Meeting. Attendance ranged between twenty to twenty-five people and the classes were well received. Future monthly sessions are planned which will address, among other things, Christocentric and universalist interpretations of our heritage.

Retreats

We held a weekend retreat at Ben Lomond in May of 1996, attended by thirty-four adults and fifteen children. A one-day fall retreat was held in November of 1996, attended by twenty-four adults and ten children. Sharing of spiritual lives took place in the small group sessions at these retreats. At the fall retreat, we were posed some beautiful queries that continue to challenge us. One in particular asked us to reflect on what early Quakers can teach us as we approach a new century and what issues now call forth from us the courageous actions of early Friends.

First Day School

First Day School continues to pose many challenges to us as a meeting. We wish to sustain our living tradition and to provide for a continuing informed Quaker presence in the world. In practice, however, this desire is easily overcome by our own personal needs for shared worship and competing cultural influences. Our children have many commitments and parents seem reluctant to press children into attendance. We need to reflect on the place of First Day School for our children and for our meeting and on its implications for what we each should bring to it. We need to ask how our attendance at Strawberry Creek Meeting satisfies our personal needs for community and how it connects us to the deeper legacy of Quaker truth. And we need to ask what this means for our support for our First Day School.

Over sixty-five children are listed in our Meeting Directory. Attendance records indicate an active children's community of twenty-four¹. Contrary to our hope and expectation, we have not seen an increase in First Day School attendance in the weeks since the shift to a later meeting time. During the months that there were two meetings each First Day, two children used child care during the 9 a.m. meeting. One child stopped attending First Day School when her parents switched to the 9 a.m. meeting.

All classes but the Teens meet at Shelton's School, where the educational environment and spacious rooms suitably meet First Day School needs. The Teens now conduct a combined meeting with the Teens from Berkeley Meeting at their meeting house. They are carpooled to Vine Street and returned to Shelton's School. This has worked well.

The Meeting's 1994 Curriculum Committee produced a three-year curriculum cycle of nine themes. Each quarter of the school year has its focus: on our meeting community, on our world and on individuals. The 1994-95 cycle theme was Community, Spirituality and Unity with Nature. The 1995-96 cycle theme was Mutual Care, Peace and Witness. The 1996-97 cycle, covered by this Report, includes themes of Worship (worshipping together; silence), Equality (and civic responsibility) and Simplicity (lifestyle and speech; honesty).

The current First Day School Committee met in May to assess last year's experience and to plan the current year. In July, most of the teachers met to familiarize themselves with the meeting's extensive curriculum materials, facilitated by a continuing member of the Curriculum Committee. Teachers for the 3-5 and 6-9 age groups designed a curriculum for the first quarter topic of Worship. There was no insufficiency of curriculum activities for these age groups. However, sporadic attendance by the children meant that many ideas were not used. Completion of any single project took much longer than anticipated because of irregular attendance.

Designing activities for the Middlers and Teens presented challenges unique to those age groups. Such challenges were met by enlisting the input of the young people themselves. For the Middlers, cooking and art projects were the preferred activities. There was no desire to engage in anything remotely resembling school or involving Quaker history. Teen activities focused on different themes each month, such as "parents", "music" or "capital punishment". Resulting discussions are peer led rather than teacher led and are relevant to their personal lives. In addition, the Teens organized an Oxfam dinner which was well supported.

All children meeting at Shelton's School have the option of attending the first fifteen minutes of meeting for worship with their parents. Two families consistently choose this option. There was a recognizable increase in the young children's ability to settle into the silence as the year progressed. The meeting, too, has become more comfortable with the presence of young children in meeting for worship.

First Day School was a direct beneficiary of the creativity generated by the move to Shelton's School. Though the precise goals of the Curriculum Committee were not met, what was achieved was the creation of a friendly, trusting environment and warm connections with adult teachers. This allowed the children of Strawberry Creek Meeting to feel good about coming to First Day School, to connect with other Quakers of their age group and to identify themselves as Quaker children.

There is concern about the relationship of the larger meeting to First Day School. Years ago, the Meeting began with a large number of families with young children. The current "trough" can be attributed to many factors: many of the original children have grown up and moved on; the meeting has attracted fewer young married couples of child-bearing age, and, as a country, we do not live under the threat of a draft. Absence of the threat of the draft may have the most bearing not only on the small number of children in the meeting but also on the infrequency of their attendance. When parents have a greater commitment to making sure their children attend First Day School and absorb its teaching, there is a stronger engagement by parents and meeting as a whole in its responsibility and involvement in teaching about Quakerism. That the content of the classes is now driven by a concern to maintain the interest of the children, and that we engage so few of our children, should give us cause to reflect.

But it may be inappropriate to see our First Day school as failing because it attracts only a small number of children. Any child who arrives at First Day School receives 100% quality attention from the teachers. Rather than seeing our First Day School as "half empty", we might see it as full of cared for and interested children whose presence reflects their parents' commitment and values. The meeting has built a sound

structure for First Day School and can look forward to growth. Moreover, the children's presence enriches the lives of the adults and not only of those who participate as teachers. This is good and deserves support.

Facilities

The move to Shelton's School required a period of special effort by the Facilities Committee to become accustomed to the more complicated procedures for setting up and taking down for the meeting and taking care of the property. It takes a team of two people two hours a week to set up and take down for meeting for worship. Their efforts are appreciated. This is a task that needs to be more widely shared.

The Newsletter

We publish a newsletter eleven times a year which contains a calendar of events, minutes of Meeting for Business, various registration forms, reports from committees, profiles of new members, discussions about testimonies and concerns for the larger world. It is mailed to 160 individuals and 10 other meetings. There is concern that we need to review the newsletter to ask how well it reflects our testimonies on simplicity and stewardship.

Community growth and change

Some of our members and attenders maintain a living connection with Strawberry Creek Meeting even though distance or disability prevents their regular attendance at Meeting for Worship. Others may have a connection that is more historical than current. The Committee on Oversight works to discern when it is appropriate to recognize that the connection has lapsed by removing names from the mailing list or releasing members from membership.

Strawberry Creek Meeting members and attenders come from a considerable diversity of religious backgrounds. The meeting has become a welcoming place where lesbians and gays evidently feel at home. We celebrate this diversity.

As we grow and change, we ask whether we are living the tradition of Quakerism. Do our new members see themselves as members of the larger stream of the Religious Society of Friends, or just as members of Strawberry Creek? How do we transmit Quaker traditions of worship, community life, testimonies, and meetings for business?

When meeting with prospective members, membership committees ensure that the new members are familiar with our traditions, sometimes recommending additional reading. A library of tapes of Quaker writings is being prepared for the sight impaired.

We are reminded that our behavior in business meetings and in meeting for worship may be taken by others as a model of Friendly behavior. We are grateful for those among us who are able to pass on traditions through personal experience and behavior as well as through more formal teaching. We trust that we are led today by the same divine light that has guided earlier generations of Quakers.

We rely on our members and attenders for financial support and voluntary labor. Seeking divine guidance, we are responsible to one another for the wise use of our time and money. We recognize that there will be cycles in the availability of resources, and that we will need to adjust our activities accordingly. To date, members have been responsive in meeting our financial needs.

Our life cycle as a meeting means that we continually lose some of our leadership, through relocation, shifts in available energies, or death. There is a continuing need to bring on new leadership while using the wisdom of our experienced leaders. Leadership -- including that which provides our less visible technical competence -- needs to be rotated to those who have been given opportunities for experience so

that we do not become dependent upon processes known only to a few people. New leaders are emerging as need arises. We seek to offer experience to rising leaders appropriate to their gifts.

- MUTUAL CARE

There is a deep and active caring for one another in the meeting much of which is not readily evident. Notable are the sustained weekly meetings for worship with sick Friends. Friends enjoy fellowship over refreshments following Meeting for Worship and pot-luck lunches are becoming a common feature of our First Day activities. "Friendly Sevens" meet in one another's houses for deepening mutual acquaintance and worship sharing. Babies and new members are welcomed. Members take hikes together. The work of our Loaves and Fishes and Hospitality Committees is much appreciated.

There is no doubt that our members value their community. Less clear is that what they value is its specifically Quaker character.

WITNESS AND STEWARDSHIP

The Meeting continues to support efforts for peace and social justice through funding support and/or representation in the East Bay Sanctuary Covenant (EBSC -- which assists refugees in our area), Religious Witness for the Homeless in San Francisco, Berkeley Ecumenical Committee on the Homeless, AFSC, FCL, FNCL, Friends Committee on Unity with Nature and Habitat for Humanity. Members are active in SHARE (a food-buying club that makes affordable food available to households without regard to financial need). In response to the bombings of houses of worship that occurred last spring and summer, the Committee on Peace and Social Order gathered funds that were donated to assist in rebuilding efforts.

The changing balance towards individual rather than collective witness reflects the times in which we live. Within our meeting, a great number of individuals are employed or voluntarily engaged in working for peace and social justice. They work -- locally, nationally and internationally -- in many areas including: the environment, poverty, aging and destitution, housing, racial tension, immigration, armaments, gender issues, rural development and governance reform. Individuals so involved draw great strength from, and bring strengths and richness to, our meeting.

Having settled ourselves in our new location at Shelton's School, we are now turning our attention to how we can be good neighbors in our new community. At a recent Meeting for Business, four committees came forward to reveal that they had been working independently on proposals for neighborhood outreach. These initiatives will be coordinated by Overseers together with Peace and Social Order.

The meeting is eagerly set to address the challenges it faces and to cherish and nurture the tradition it has so gratefully inherited.

ⁱ The numbers are:

Nursery	2 (one attends two or more times a month)
3-5's	3 (two attend two or more times a month)
6-9's	7 (three attend two or more times a month)
Middlers	6 (three attend two or more times a month)
Teens	6 (two attend two or more times per month)
Total	24 (eleven attend two or more times per month)

During the months when two meetings took place, two children used Child Care during the 9 a.m. meeting.

Strawberry Creek Meeting State of the Meeting Report

May 14, 1996

A sizeable number of us - about 30 of our usual 70 "regulars" at Sunday Meetings - attended and contributed freely to a special session to review the state of our Meeting for this report. We readily recognized that the past year has been a painful and difficult one, but one that has contributed to our growth as a caring Quaker community. Here are our findings:

Six Friends became members of Strawberry Creek Meeting during 1995 and four were released from membership, following Overseer's process of carefully reviewing long-time nonattending members, bringing the membership to sixty-nine Friends. Four associate members were added and four babies were born. We are grateful that many young adults are attending Meeting and we welcome the growth in the number of gay, lesbian, and bisexual members and attenders.

This year we created many opportunities to gather together to share food, ideas, concerns and to get to know each other better. We had summer picnics, potluck gatherings to welcome the new babies, children, and new members, newcomer's brunches, the annual Christmas Posada, an Easter Potluck, and farewell gatherings for several members who moved away or went to college. We hosted a fund-raising brunch for FCL, which gave us a chance to meet and ask questions of a State legislator and legislative staff. The young Strawberries hosted a Haitian Benefit Dinner, raising money and school supplies for children in Haiti. Our retreats nourished us spiritually and strengthened us as a community. Forums on clerking, affirmative action, PYM draft advices and queries, the single life, and parenting were organized, the latter two in conjunction with Berkeley Friends Meeting. In November and March we met as "Friendly Sevens" for simple meals and Quaker Dialogue in about seven homes. About 40 people signed up for a six week "Quakerism 102" course, which is being offered this spring.

First Day School has been an important priority for our Meeting. We have benefitted from the careful and thoughtful efforts of the First Day School Committee to develop and follow a coordinated curriculum, though much work still remains to be done in this regard. In working with the children and teenagers, numerous adults have also experienced opportunities for growth and learning. One particularly successful First Day School activity has been to make cards for people who are away from Meeting due to illness or other circumstances; there is an opportunity for everyone to add messages at the end of Meeting, and recipients have been very appreciative. Our First Day School is divided into Nursery care plus four age groups: "3-5", "6-9", "Middlers", and High School. Over thirty children have attended at some time during the past year. Weekly attendance for any given group varies from zero to six, with the total in all groups averaging from ten to fifteen. Since our children come from various geographic areas and many different schools, we are still struggling with how to make our Meeting a meaningful community for our children. Some children and teachers have been more consistent than others in their attendance, which is a further challenge to community-building. We are particularly concerned that attendance becomes more infrequent as children grow older, so that the upper age groups often fall below critical mass for fun and learning.

Our individual lives and the life of the Meeting have been enriched through connections to other Friends and Friends organizations. Several Strawberries are on the AFSC staff and administrative committees, on FCL, and on the Friends House board, giving us a strong connection with these Quaker organizations. The Meeting is helping support an associate member who is attending Earlham College; it has been gratifying to hear of her involvement in that Quaker community. Two other associate members are also attending Quaker colleges. A number of Strawberries enjoyed participating in the John Woolman School work camp last summer. We feel a strong connection with PYM and appreciate our PYM representative's efforts in facilitating communication with PYM. Strawberries who attended PYM have shared their

experiences with others in the Meeting in various ways, including a "Review of PYM" session. Several Strawberries have been active in the Sexual Minority Subcommittee of PYM. Participation in programs at Ben Lomond Quaker Center, including our own Spring Retreat, has been stimulating to many of us. Connections with the wider Quaker community also included hosting evening gatherings for the Brinton Visitor and Pendle Hill on the Road.

Many members and attenders are involved in working for and witnessing for peace, justice and social change, both locally and around the world. Activities of Strawberries this past year have included building Walls for Peace in the Bay Area and Japan, travelling to Germany in recognition of the AFSC work there after WWII, and participating in the Women's conference in China. The Meeting as a whole has benefitted through participation in these activities and from after-meeting or evening sessions in which participants have shared their experiences. Some Friends have followed their leadings to live and work for social justice in other countries, including Nigeria, Costa Rica, India, and Fiji, while many Friends have pursued their concerns locally. We appreciate the work being done by many individuals from the Meeting community to help improve the lives of others. We value our connections with them and the bonds they help us make with people and communities in the Bay Area and around the world.

Two major Meeting issues claimed ungainly amounts of time and energy during the past year. The first was how to structure the entrance of those arriving after Meeting for Worship has begun so as both to protect the silence of the opening group and to facilitate the inclusion of all. Worship and Ministry labored conscientiously with various experiments, but not without arousing strong reactions from many in the Meeting, including those who felt negatively judged by the process. Through threshing sessions and long Meetings for Business we have now achieved the development described in the current minute:

Since the time of beginning our current plan for entering meeting, a new and marked deepening of the meeting for worship during the first fifteen minutes has been widely felt among us. This uninterrupted period has encouraged our centering and readiness for God's Spirit among us, in the reverent listening we so want to practice. And when the time has come for those downstairs to enter, they have done so with quiet purpose. This fall the arrival of teachers and beginning of children's classes at 9:15 have also contributed to our gathering and settling in by our appointed time.

Strawberry Creek Monthly Meeting now adopts as its practice: to begin worship at 9:30 and to designate a quiet waiting room for any who arrive up to 9:45, who will then, at the greeter's signal, enter the meeting room to join, as the Advices and Queries invite, "in expectant waiting for the promptings of the Divine Spirit." Friends who arrive after 9:45 will be encouraged to join the meeting for worship, being mindful of the gathered meeting.

While recognizing the greater depth of our less interrupted worship and the shared respect shown by all in cooperating to achieve this mutual goal, we also know that the healing process will be ongoing. Oversight reminded us that resolution of the lateness issue was made more difficult by our having fallen away from good process. In their Statement on Process and Caring, read after Meeting and published in our newsletter, Oversight identified for us:

... some of the features of good order among members of the Religious Society of Friends. First, the committees on Oversight and Worship and Ministry are responsible for our community and our worship together. Concerns that affect our communal life together should be brought to one of these two committees. If certain individuals are doing something that hurts our worship or life together, these committees have the sole responsibility for speaking to them -- what is sometimes quaintly called "eldering." Although individual Friends should certainly attend directly and personally to small things that are hindering their good relations with other individual Friends, they should never speak on behalf of the Meeting community -- that is the function of the Meeting and its committees. Second, it is best if we avoid anonymous communications in the Meeting. It is much harder "to hear where the words come from" when we don't know who wrote them, and we therefore are much more likely to be offended by them. ... Anonymity isn't conducive to what should be the nurturing nature of our community.

The second issue involves our exploration of moving to a different site. For ten years, we have enjoyed the privilege of renting space from the Berkeley Friends

Church. But as their own needs for space have changed from time to time, we have begun to feel that our consequent adjustments of meeting time, and especially of First Day School arrangements, have not been in our best interest as a Meeting. After friendly conversations with Friends Church, we have addressed the issue through called and strenuous threshing sessions and have reviewed the explorations of a site committee. The reporting and consequent airing of discomforts have continued, but are greatly diminished due to our open, time-consuming, but faithful process for listening to one another and reminding ourselves of the primary necessity for achieving a resolution that will enhance the life of the whole Meeting. We are now at the point of experimenting by holding two Meetings for Worship at the one suitable option of the many carefully researched by the site committee and will thereafter consider what next.

Simultaneous with our process struggles (and perhaps not unrelated), there is a general sense that our Meetings for Worship have deepened. One hears appreciation for the quality of worship, and it is noticeable that the ministering is more broadly shared. Possibly we may lack seasoned, traditional ministry as our hallmark, but we are blessed by the reverent, fresh, spiritual insights of young and old, long-time and newly initiated ministers. Worship and Ministry is currently launching "Quakerism 102" to remind us that our ministry is not limited to our Meeting only, but is by historical tradition and our own understanding a way of life through which we translate our testimonies. Our group worship enables us to let our individual lives speak.

Spoken ministry is but one form of our religious service, and the hard work of our eleven committees is carried on by over one hundred members and attenders, taking responsible stewardship for all of our community needs. The Hospitality Committee has been especially vigorous in organizing welcomings, farewell gatherings, and other events, and their work has contributed greatly to our sense of ourselves as a community. As we have wrestled with issues of concern to us this year, our processes have sometimes left individual discomforts unresolved, which the Meeting agreed to refer to Oversight for healing. By lovingly attending to these concerns, Overseers have

provided Meeting with a pathway for moving beyond hurt feelings. Their efforts to move Meeting back to good process where it has fallen short have been instrumental in bringing the community back to wholeness. Oversight has also expressed a great deal of caring and concern through their availability for guidance and support, both spiritual and financial; most of this work has gone on, appropriately, without public attention.

Many individual Friends have also been engaged in the work of caring for and nurturing each other. A number of new members and attenders have movingly described their experiences of love, a reservoir of trust, and a sense of belonging in Meeting. Others, while experiencing a strong sense of spiritual community, have expressed a desire to find a comparable sense of social community. All in all, most members and attenders have tended to express an appreciation of the Meeting as a caring community, both nurturing and dynamic.

Strawberry Creek Meeting State of the Society Report
May 1995

And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves...

1 Peter 4:8, King James Bible

Above all hold unfailing your love for one another...

1 Peter 4:8, Revised Standard Bible

Our Meeting celebrated its fifteenth birthday on October 15, 1994. This is the tenth year that we have shared space with Berkeley Friends Church. We note with wonder that Ravahn Samati, the baby Jesus of our first Christmas play in the Fellowship Hall, is now a ten-year-old member of First Day School. Friends Church celebrated its 100th anniversary in 1994.

Our First Day School serves around sixty children. A Curriculum Committee has brought structure to the content of our First Day School program. The school year has been divided into three sections, each with an overall theme and materials and activities appropriate to each age group. The themes are community, spirituality, and unity with nature. We continue to incorporate silent worship as well as attendance at adult Meeting for Worship into this program. The high-school class organized a fund-raiser for Oxfam the weekend before Thanksgiving, serving a "hunger dinner" to sixty people. The event raised not only money but consciousness. While everyone paid the same to attend, only a few were served a full meal; others received rice and beans or bread and water.

Our adult education program has flowered. We have gathered for spiritual growth, in a series on the book Jesus, a New Vision by Martin Borg. We have focussed on care for those nearest to us, in a session on wills and simplifying paperwork for our survivors. We have learned to serve the Meeting more effectively, in a workshop on clerking. We have considered together the dilemma of living as Friends among the world's people, in a discussion on gift giving and the ways in which we celebrate Christmas. We have striven to learn how to make the world a better place, receiving together the gift of a presentation by Victor Lewis of the Oakland Men's Project on understanding and deflecting violence.

Our newsletter is an important part of the life of the Meeting. A new feature, "Dear Strawberries," provides an opportunity for Friends to share questions and concerns with the Meeting at large.

Our Winter and Spring Meeting retreats provided further opportunities to know one another and to enrich our spiritual lives. The theme of the January retreat was "Roots and Fruits of Our Faith." That of the Spring Retreat at Ben Lomond was "Light shines in the Darkness." Retreat Committee felt an increased sense of connection to the Meeting as they devised themes and programs for these events.

Transitions: Andrea English and Tom Whiteman were married under the care of the Meeting. We celebrated with joy, with love, with parades, and with banners. We were also gladdened by the marriage of Kenneth Leonard and Joan Lynch. Ken and Joan are now in Tanzania. Melinda Glines is serving with the Peace Corps in Fiji. James Hamm, a faithful attender, has made a challenging transition to independent living. Rick Herbert, another attender, has adopted a two-

year-old girl from Puerto Rico. We rejoiced in a visit from Brian Erickson. He and Patti Mojeski Erickson continue to flourish, spiritually and professionally, in Costa Rica.

Our committees have grown in size and number until Nominating committee found itself with more vacancies to fill than there were members and attenders to fill them. Mindful of simplicity, we are at work on a restructuring ; reducing the size of some committees and merging others. Inability to find a convenient time has prevented some committees from meeting at all. Many Sundays were difficult because of special events scheduled after Meeting for Worship. To ease this situation, the second Sunday of each month has been designated "Committee Sunday," and the third Sunday is reserved for after-meeting events.

A plan for seating late arrivals to Meeting for Worship was one which, somewhat to our surprise, called on our deepest reserves of charity for one another. Until recently, there was no formal arrangement; which is to say that each person entered as he or she arrived. As our Meeting for Worship has grown--it now averages around sixty attenders--the stream of arrivals had become, for some Friends, a real impediment to gathered worship. Worship and Ministry Committee, after trying various approaches to the problem, proposed a plan similar to that prevailing in many other Monthly Meetings: a greeter meets the late-comers outside the entrance to Meeting and worships with them until fifteen minutes after the start of Meeting, when all enter together. Some Friends felt that this plan would exclude, judge, and even punish those who were late, often for reasons beyond their control. Others expressed a conviction that any possibility of increasing the depth of Meeting for Worship should be given serious consideration. A heartfelt discussion brought out many of our feelings about the relationship of the individual to the Meeting for Worship. Even with this preparation, a lively exchange of views took place in Meeting for Business before the minute was approved, with one member standing aside. The procedure will be reviewed in September. This opportunity to express our commitment to corporate worship and the need to examine the place this hour a week holds in our lives have helped the worshipful silence to deepen and our ministry to become more spirit-centered, even as the Meeting grows larger.

We have reached out to the world, as individuals and through other groups. We have taken advantage of opportunities offered by the Meeting, of which participation in the SHARE Food Program, work in the Food Pantry with Friends Church, and buying scrip to support the East Bay Sanctuary Covenant are only a few.

The "fervent charity" which Peter urged on the first Christians has been shown by individuals in the Meeting in many ways, extending practical help and loving support to other members and attenders faced with problems ranging from moving furniture to life-threatening illness.

But perhaps we need to give more thought to Peter's message. As a worsening economic climate takes its toll on some of our members, Overseers have noted with concern the probability that scholarship and other funds are not being applied for by Friends who might have use for them to attend gatherings and for other special needs. It is probable that, as Friends, we have for some time been more comfortable with the idea of offering help than of asking for it, particularly in the form of money. Should they continue, these hard times may teach us to grow in that unflinching love for each other that Peter speaks of, teaching us to receive, as well as give, in the Light.

Strawberry Creek Friends Meeting State of the Meeting April 1994

During the past year our meeting has continued to grow; we added 3 new members, bringing our total to 66. First-day attendance is usually eighty or ninety. This includes visitors, children, members, and attenders. With this growth has come both new blessings and challenges. While we welcome new participants, we are challenged to get to know them and to assimilate them into our meeting.

We feel a need to strengthen our understanding of ourselves as Quakers. This is reflected in many facets of our meeting life:

- . In both adult education and in our high-school group we struggled with the application of the Peace Testimony to our everyday challenges: "how do we respond to the violence we see around us?"

- . There have been a series of intense discussions about the quality of our meetings for worship, which is deep and strengthening and gives sustenance to the lives of those attending. Some Friends are disturbed by latecomers. Since each person's presence contributes to the meeting, it is important that all worshippers be present at the whole meeting, whenever possible.

- . The Curriculum subcommittee of the Religious Education committee has been gathering information from many sources on possible programs. They are also meeting with parents to discern their expectations regarding their children's Quaker education.

- . There have been several, well-attended adult education classes on the meaning of meeting membership. There is a continuing need for adult education for both new and long-time attenders and a concern as to how to meet this need.

In these and other sessions, we see our growing community struggling for self definition. We seek to include new participants and enrich our corporate worship while at the same time increasing our service to the community.

We continue to serve the needs of our individual members with support groups and clearness committees. There is a small mid-week meeting for worship with a Friend who has a serious illness. We helped sponsor a member's child, with special learning needs, to attend Delaware Valley Friends School. Some of our members are active in the larger Society of Friends; such as quarterly and yearly meeting, Friends General Conference, American Friends Service Committee, Friends Committee on Legislation, and Friends in Unity with Nature. We would like to encourage more members and attenders to participate in these active arms of the Society of Friends. We share the sense that there is something of substance about being committed to a Friends Meeting, and we have a need to articulate this and apply it to our lives.

This past year saw an increase in our response to the plight of the poor in our community. We responded with increased energy in (our) food distribution programs, SHARE and the food pantry, which we supported and staffed along with the Friends Church, and members of the community. Some members worked with Habitat for Humanity on a regular basis. Individual Friends worked with focused programs such as jobs for the homeless.

There has been an increase in participation of attenders on committees, and also the largest number of first-time clerks. This emphasizes our responsibility to nourish this new leadership. While we have done some training in Quaker process, we recognize that we must do more.

Strawberry Creek continues to glory in the number of children in our meeting. There were an average of 23 children in the children's program during most of the year, led by a devoted group of teachers. The high school group meets every other week, with a high degree of success.

Our Spring and Winter retreats continue to provide a powerful forum for both community building and individual enrichment. This year we moved our Winter retreat from November to January with the happy result that attendance was the highest ever.

Hospitality for both newcomers and regular attenders is offered by the Loaves and Fishes committee after meeting, by the Hospitality committee at the Christmas Posada and other special occasions, and by Overseers at Newcomer's Brunches.

We have a new appreciation for the fact that Berkeley has three Friends meetings (Berkeley Friends Meeting, Berkeley Friends Church, and Strawberry Creek Friends Meeting). We published a joint meeting directory and are working together to prepare a booklet, "Planning Ahead - Meeting Our Responsibilities When Death Occurs". We shared special activities, such as a Christmas service and Posada (arranged by our meeting) and Quaker Heritage Day (arranged by the Friends Church). The Young Adult Friends are meeting regularly with members from all three meetings.

In June we celebrated one Friend's 80th birthday by staging a dinner as a benefit for the AFSC. All three local Quaker groups were involved as were Friends from throughout California and the US.

As we enter the coming year, we feel exhilarated by the diversity of our meeting and challenged to renew our commitment to corporate worship as the center of our lives.

STATE OF THE MEETING REPORT
STRAWBERRY CREEK FRIENDS MEETING
April 4, 1993

(final version)

We are generally pleased with the quality of our meetings for worship. Visitors often remark on their reverential atmosphere. The size of the meeting continues to grow. Perhaps there is a direct correlation. However, lateness of worshippers continues to be a problem, exacerbated by adjustment to an earlier starting time (9:30 am) since September 1992. Along with the earlier meeting time, our children now regularly join us for the last quarter hour. To some, the resulting commotion is distracting; to others the children's participation is well worth the distraction. In any event, worshippers also are beset with other noise distractions such as street traffic and the settling of tardy adults.

At the close of meeting we continue to each introduce ourselves and make announcements. As our meeting grows, this process takes longer and not everyone appears to fully grasp the meaning of the concept BRIEF. Yet, we intend to continue the practice because, on balance, we find it more beneficial than burdensome. We remind ourselves of the need for and joy of reaching out to newcomers who attend our meetings for worship. A suggestion was made that after the rise of meeting, each of us personally greet someone whom we do NOT know before turning toward old friends.

Our community of ^{people}worshippers has grown. We wonder if we may find ourselves with an embarrassment of riches. Some Friends express concern that the meeting may grow too large to meet the needs of the individuals who comprise it. Our community has become increasingly aware that the world at large is fragile and fraught with increased distrust and violence. Friends note that we offer a space where respect and concern for all of God's creation and creatures is shared. The increased participation over the years has been essentially wonderful, enriching our lives and our worship. Yet we ask ourselves why so few people of color and so few university students attend our worship. Is it because we do not reach out? Because we do not truly welcome them? Because they simply prefer other forms or places of worship? We feel a need to be especially mindful of the subtlety of racism as well as a need to respect the genuine free choices of others. On the positive side, a Young Adult Friends Group, begun in August 1992 by young Friends from Strawberry Creek and Vine Street Meetings and Berkeley Friends Church, has grown to 30 regular attenders, offering a special opportunity for spiritual seeking and community among young adults.

We have welcomed visiting Friends in our meetings for worship from many places and individuals among us have had the pleasure of sharing in worship in Friends Meetings in many other parts of this country and beyond. We have also grown closer to our immediate spiritual neighbors, Berkeley Friends Church, as we have worked through the thorny problems of sharing finite

building space by adjusting the times when we use it, as well as sharing in the simple joy of maintaining the building. We have also shared in educational endeavors and in worship, e.g, shared Thanksgiving day worship.

During the summer months, in addition to our regular indoor First Day morning gatherings, we also celebrate our communion with the creator with simultaneous outdoor meetings for worship in Tilden Park, followed by potluck picnics. We also continue to gather informally at mid-week meetings for worship and continue our practice of holding semi-annual retreats at which we have an opportunity to strengthen our spiritual bonds with one another and deepen our awareness and appreciation for the light within each one of us.

This year, our meeting held three threshing sessions in which our concerns, fears and divergent views about the Meeting's role in providing clearness and support for same sex partners seeking marriage under the care of the meeting were aired. As a result, we resolved to do so with the same care and concern as for opposite sex partners. Although unity on the resulting minute was achieved without unanimity, Friends who did not approve saw their way clear to standing aside. As a meeting, we feel we have grown individually and collectively in the process, including acquiring an increased sensitivity to the value of the meeting's nurturance of all marriages. Many who attended these sessions praised the quality of the process and the tender manner in which our gifted facilitator guided us in our quest for truth.

This year approximately fifty members and attenders were involved in a comprehensive seven-week course of study called "Quakerism 101", which included weekly readings, lectures and small discussion groups. It was a stimulating experience for both those new and not so new to the history, philosophy and practices of the Society of Friends.

In the tradition of Friends, our spiritual leadings continue to manifest themselves in community care as well as worship - in the immediate Strawberry community, in the neighborhood and in the world beyond. This care has expressed itself in the context of the traditional rites of passage of individual Strawberries as we have rejoiced in births and marriages, suffered through illnesses, mourned the passage of life and rallied to assist each other in times of crisis. Overseers have discretely addressed numerous specific personal and corporate concerns by organizing clearness committees and the logistics of caring for each other from scheduling visits to those who are sick to forming a telephone tree for use in the event of another community-wide emergency, such as the Oakland Hills fire.

We have participated in local community outreach through the Food Pantry, project SHARE, Habitat for Humanity, CRECE, East Bay Sanctuary Covenant as well as in our own organizations such as AFSC, FCL, and FGC, Young Friends, and our regional Quarterly and

Yearly Meetings. Several of our members spent time in reflection at Pendle Hill, others participated in the exhilarating Western Gathering of Friends.

We have followed our individual leadings and persuaded others to join our cause with regard to advocacy of civil liberties in our own and other countries such as central America and Haiti; and voiced our concerns on behalf of the treatment of other members of God's community in the natural world as we sought to become more aware of our just place in that community. Yet we must continually ask ourselves if there is more that we can do to assure respect for each member of our human community as well as other living communities.

In the material realm, our housing continues in the Friends Church social hall, a simple and pleasant room which converts readily to Silent Meetings, exuberant coffee hours and pot lucks, serious studies and holiday programs. Our library has outgrown its bookcart and we now have sturdy and modest but lovely bookshelves, built by volunteers. Our burgeoning archives are tolerated in their many locations, but have no centrally located permanent home.

Donations keep pace with need in an amazing way, since none are personally solicited. We continue to support our own meeting activities as well as numerous Quaker and other organizations of good will as well as lending support to our children in Friends Schools and to Friends following their light in other lands.

Business meetings are plentifully attended and give ample evidence of the daily and weekly ministrations by our group to keep the meeting in the light by attending to hospitality, education, peace and social order, oversight, retreats, ministry and worship, newsletter, mailing, records and the myriad maintenance tasks associated with use of the building in which we meet and worship. However, some concern was expressed at the manner in which our business meetings are conducted in that there is often too much coming and going so that "busy-ness" impedes the process by which we hope to discern the movement of God among us as a gathered whole while we make business decisions.

Postive vital statistics record an increase of six members, three new babies, who have been warmly welcomed, and one joyous wedding celebrated under the care of the meeting. The number of children in First Day School has increased to 55. We have recently begun, each spring, to recognize all children who attend First Day School with associate member certificates if they and their parents wish them.

State of the Society 1992

Report for Strawberry Creek Monthly Meeting

Our Shoebox runneth over. Strawberry Creek Meeting has one new member this year, three memberships pending, and a wealth of new attenders, though others have scattered, and Wesley Eastman, an elderly attender, passed on. Our library has outgrown its shelves, and we puzzle what to do with our archives, now tenuously scattered in members' closets. We fear to imagine the size of the heap if all were brought together. Our very own phone message, new last year, regularly attracts callers. A new committee focuses only on facilities. We found ourselves reexamining the meaning and purpose of our now-grown meeting's nominal contributions to organizations. Whither simplicity?

Membership stands at 58, with two brunches during last year for new attenders. Only two infants were born into Meeting, but informal record checking suggests that childhood is still a more popular vocation within Strawberry Creek than any other PYM meeting. We have 37 associate members but almost twice that number are on the First-Day school rolls. We miss our youth, though: in a town of twenty thousand university undergraduates we attract almost no attenders of that age, and few from high school. We begin to ponder our social fabric: are there gaps to mend?

The need for that fabric came into clear focus with the October fire. One adult and an unrelated associate member of Strawberry Creek each lost a home to the Oakland Hills Fire, which touched Berkeley Friends Meeting and Berkeley Friends Church as well. Many more of us were threatened. Since that time we have defined contact procedures for emergencies that may affect us.

Friends in Berkeley have shared more than the loss of homes, however. The three meetings' peace committees continued to work together after the Gulf war, producing a musical benefit for the AFSC Gulf Fund, and a three-meeting directory will soon be published. Strawberry Creek and Berkeley Friends Meeting jointly hosted a colloquium on Quaker Process last summer and PYM Representatives Meeting this spring. Events of common interest to Strawberry Creek and Friends Church are too numerous to mention, and our new Facilities Committee has become very helpful in fostering our increased contribution to caring for the shared physical plant. A four-meeting picnic included Hayward Worship Group as well.

Within Strawberry Creek, events have ranged from a book and record swap, a group sing, a group trip to an A's game and monthly summer picnics and other potlucks, through an art exhibit, sharings of travels and studies, some supported by meeting, to more purely spiritual or social-order concerns. Letter-writing efforts and witnesses including the annual gathering at the Nevada Test Site; community-building events like "Friendly Sixes", an affinity group, women's group activities and midweek worship; adult education events including a long and active series on liberation theology leading into the role of Friends in today's world; Meeting retreats and holiday events: the litany is enough to challenge any chronicler or listener, but the aggregate is vital.

The aggregate is the rhythm and splash of waves on the surface of our water, bending our Meeting's light into shifting patterns new to us, that we may learn, that we may find again that we are more together than alone. Our worship surprises us often, and we are pleased. Oh, we are late and we snuffle and we're sometimes effervescent and sometimes personal, but we are blessed for all of that, and pleased. Many who come to us fall easily into our silence and our spirit, to feel themselves kindred when we break and to find us welcoming and easy. Such is our spirit, and though we foster it in some ways perhaps, it goes beyond what we singly or in concert might claim credit for.

We look ahead, towards what needs our youth might have that we fail to serve, or others. We want to make our Quaker heritage and context more accessible among us. We have begun the slow and careful process of examining marriage and same-sex relationships. We grapple with our growth and our space, with our need for simplicity and our need to do and be many things, with our energy and depth, and with our failings. We go on.

Strawberry Creek Meeting State of the Society Report, 5th month 1991

We are grateful for the ways that worship has prospered this year, seemingly challenged at times by a leaning towards the personal in ministry, yet surprising ourselves repeatedly at whither a seemingly humble beginning will lead us in the course of our worship. We are blessed in the depth of our gatherings, and the power found within. The road into and through the Persian Gulf war wrenched us. We brought a newly sharpened anguish into worship. Our meetings swelled, in part with new faces, and even more perhaps, with Friends returning in a time of need. We found in our worship a touchstone of life and peace, a drinking of deep waters in a time of desert struggles. As we continue to ponder the sources of our contributions in ministry, we ask whether we can express our own depths, and whether we can hear each other's, as they are offered into the Light of the Spirit in worship. This year Worship and Ministry Committee composed a pamphlet to give a basis for our understandings of vocal ministry.

This is our sixth year of renting space for our meeting for worship and other Meeting activities from Berkeley Friends Church. Enough people have reported that it was difficult to find our Meeting that we obtained a Meeting phone and listed ourselves in the Yellow Pages to improve our accessibility. We also note that in a university town we have only occasional undergraduate visitors. These concerns lead some Friends to wonder if we might be guilty of hiding our light under a bushel.

Once found, we believe we are an especially warm meeting. New attenders regularly report feeling welcomed and at home. They say others reach out to get to know them but are not overly pushy. Many friends point to our practice of saying names at the rise of meeting as being especially helpful in this regard; even long-timers appreciate this practice. This year Overseers held two after-meeting lunch sessions to get to know new attenders. A special three meeting "workshop" was held in the fall to explore issues of Quakerism and to help new attenders move more deeply into the life of the Meeting.

There continues to be felt a strong sense of personal need for educational broadening in matters of religion and conscience. In part this reflects the eagerness of convinced Friends to nourish their deepening Quaker roots; in part also, it reflects the perception among many of us in this modern age that our upbringing left us less literate in matters religious than in many other areas.

As Strawberry Creek Meeting continues to grow, we find it is also in such small gatherings as educational events that we forge the bonds of community. It is there that we feel most free to speak, and there that we may listen at sufficient leisure to begin to feel we know one another. We held a series discussing the writings of John Punshon; a small mid-week worship continues; half a dozen small groups meet regularly to share thought and fellowship; Overseers arranged a series of meetings for sharing such challenges as our workplace, personal loss and addictions; we organized a pre-war colloquium on events in Iran. We found times for experiencing the dimensions of introspection and joy in our community through our fall and spring retreats, and a gathering for shared pizza.

Strawberry Creek Meeting welcomed seven attenders into membership this year, including several long-term attenders. Two members transferred to other Meetings and one membership was laid down, and we now stand at 57 members. Four new babies were born into Meeting this year! We held a welcoming for them, as well as for new adult members. We encourage associate membership for Meeting children.

With the Friends Church we share the teaching of several of our First Day school classes — the nursery and the 5th-7th grade group — and have conferred together about these programs with increased mutual understanding. Each Meeting often extends an invitation to the other to attend special events — Easter sunrise meeting, Quaker Heritage day, presentations by visiting speakers — and we formed a joint marriage clearness committee for the wedding of a member of Strawberry Creek to an attender of both Meetings. On the other hand, workdays for upkeep of the building are underattended by Strawberries. Recent world events have prompted the three Friends Meetings in Berkeley to gather to explore our capacity to witness jointly to the Quaker peace testimony. Together we have sponsored two gatherings: a forum on the hoped-for "peace dividend" and an all-day draft counseling training, staffed by members of each group. Our Peace and Social Order committees continue meeting together to search for paths of witness for nonviolence in our culture. We are glad for these expressions of friendship and cooperative seeking.

The outreach we undertake has been especially visible during the war. For several ^{months} ~~weeks~~ before the war and during its course a group of Strawberries leafletted for peace at a nearby BART stop during Wednesday afternoon rush hour. We received many thanks from passers-by for this activity. The Meeting was involved in draft counseling through counseling by individual members, placement of ads for military counseling in area high school and college newspapers, and the joint draft counselor's training. There were at least twenty of us marching behind our Quaker banner at the January 26 peace march in San Francisco. An affinity group was formed during the war which is continuing to meet and take action together.

Ongoing projects include coordination of a SHARE food program distribution center and help with the Food Pantry. We contribute financially both to Quaker groups and to others, including the East Bay Sanctuary Covenant and the work of sojourners from our Meeting who are living in Central America. Our budget this year is \$11,500. We share our costs by estimating a per-member amount of \$210. Some can give more, some less; many attenders as well as members contribute.

Religious education involves 40-45 young people regularly. Imaginative and committed First Day school teachers have shared life stories, occupations, Biblical and Quaker writings, and monthly serving in a soup kitchen as forms of our learning to love. We have found that the practice of teachers reporting at the rise of Meeting on what their classes did that day helps us to include the children and value what each person in our community has done that morning. Many adults have participated in teaching, though we continue to look for ways to increase that number and improve access to curriculum materials.

Children wrote and performed two plays this year, and joined wholeheartedly in the posada at Christmas. We are pleased to have a strong group of younger children who share readily with us. We want to respond with respect to their endeavors and questions and to challenge ourselves to see the ways they may move into the life of the Meeting as they grow. We note that no one younger than college-age currently attends a Friends school, and that older teenagers and those in their early twenties find scarce company in our Meeting. Several have left to become part of larger church youth groups. How may we better nurture community among those who would choose to be Friends?

Business in our Meeting is generally conducted with 20-30 Friends in attendance, about half of our membership. We continue to question ourselves about our manner of seeking light for our actions. We aim to come prepared for the discipline of meeting for business while also learning ways to open matters that challenge us. Is unity that comes easily a well-rooted unity? What ways can we learn to examine our deepest concerns together, or to share our leadings as they evolve? Reading monthly the Advices and Queries and asking a committee to offer its reflections on them at business meeting has been a valued way to consider how these may guide us now, or point out new questions that stir us.

We have felt the vitality of our Meeting committees this year. They have shown us the commitment of individuals to the community life, and many of us have found that the everyday work of the Meeting contributes to nurturing our spiritual growth. Our wider associations with Friends — the institutional realities of Quarterly and Yearly meetings and other related organizations — have perhaps less substance to them. Currently fewer than a dozen of us regularly attend the larger gatherings that could strengthen our sense of the body of Friends in the world and our fellowship with them. We are challenged to carry forward the living experience of the Quaker community and not just Strawberry Creek.

How can we more effectively contribute to the unfolding of a Quaker vision? We as a Meeting reflect many characteristics of the society we live in; yet we are called by our heritage and inward conviction to foster change. We recognize that we maintain a less "peculiar" lifestyle than was characteristic of earlier Friends, yet we wish to be no less radical in our faith. We see this as a challenge calling us to dynamic, prophetic witness in the midst of the contradictions of our times. We find, in our sharings together, that the choices are many for those who care. We pray for the Spirit and courage of love to infuse our common life and our movements into the world we care for.