## COLLEGE PARK QUARTERLY MEETING
### 2017 – 2018 State of the Meeting reports

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### Worship Groups
- CSP Soledad
- Friends House
- Lake County
- Oakland
- Placer County (Grass Valley)
- Sierra Foothills (Delta)
- Southern Humboldt
- Ukiah
- Western Shore
Apple Seed Friends Meeting
State of the Meeting, 2018

In the past year, we have faithfully held regular meetings for worship in the space we rent from Many Rivers Bookstore in Sebastopol, CA. Attendance has been as low as three and as many as 11 or a dozen. Our total official membership in the Religious Society of Friends remains 14, there being no changes in the last year. Several of our members live far away from Sebastopol.

For monthly meetings on the occasion of business, we have found it necessary to rent space in the Senior Citizen Center about three blocks away. Due to our small size, we are now proceeding as a “committee of the whole” -- in place of the various committees so often associated with a Friends meeting. We have three officers (clerk, recording clerk, and treasurer) as well as appointed representatives to College Park Quarterly Meeting and to Pacific Yearly Meeting.

We face several challenges:

1. We are undeniably struggling with technology as we try to manage electronic communications using the internet.
2. We would like to attract some younger seekers (not just to help us out with the technology!)
3. Our ages and small numbers makes it difficult to find ways to bring our concerns to the larger community over the rise in racial and religious intolerance, conflict between police and civilians, economic inequalities, and ever-new war zones. We remain deeply concerned and support other peacemakers’ activities.

We hold funds in the Redwood Credit Union in Santa Rosa: a checking and a savings account (“shares” in the Credit Union). We made modest donations to local charities, including a small donation to a low-income scholarship fund at the Sonoma State University. Responding to the firestorms in Sonoma County last October, we made a large, unbudgeted donation to the food bank and to a fire-relief fund.

We have held several social gatherings in members’ homes loosely titled “Quaker Eights.” These have been occasions to share a potluck meal and to discuss a topic of interest.

Our elderly membership struggles with on-going health issues. But we find spiritual support with one another in these unsettling times. We have found both the vocal ministry and silence of our worship to be moving and nourishing. Afterthoughts and after-worship sharing genuinely draws our meeting community together. It opens us to the uniqueness of the life of spirit each of us experiences and to the challenges in staying true and whole.
State of the Meeting Report – May 2018

Berkeley Friends Meeting

This past year saw the completion of the major renovations of our meeting house, and the start of many different social and political actions by Berkeley Meeting in the world.

**Meeting Life:** Berkeley Meeting currently conducts or hosts four Meetings for Worship each week: in addition to the 11 AM Sunday meetings, with a typical attendance of 40 to 50 people, we have more lightly populated meetings at 9 AM Sundays, 7 AM Wednesdays (jointly sponsored by Berkeley and Strawberry Creek meetings, and 7 PM Thursdays (sponsored by Strawberry Creek Meeting). Our meetings for worship have been more diverse recently, with more people of color and younger people participating. We’ve been trying, with some success, to be more timely in arriving for the 11 AM meeting for worship, deepening the experience. We recently enjoyed a pancake breakfast between the Sunday morning meetings for worship; we were especially pleased to experience the deepened sense of a gathered meeting that was made possible by that friendly and noisy gathering preceding the 11 am worship.

We grieve the recent loss to cancer of our dear Friend Leslie Preston. We have welcomed several new members this year A regional Young Adult Friends group has been very active, including monthly meetings for worship and lunches together. A member who had sojourned for two years was heartened to experience the vibrancy of the meeting on her return. We have continued our oral history project. The adult education program, a reading group, a Quaker history study group, a Quaker film series, and poetry and worship sharing groups, have been ongoing and helpful. Members of the meeting have been doing committee work with much love, thoughtfulness, and care. A member of our Ministry and Care committee comments that the committee work doesn’t currently feel like a chore, because of the care we express for one another. Our Final Affairs Subcommittee has supported us with helpful work on end of life issues, and we’ve faced challenges in that area. Visiting Subcommittee is very active in maintaining contact with Friends in the area who for various reasons are unable to make it to Meeting.

A recent puzzle night presented jointly by the Berkeley and Strawberry Creek First Day School committees was very well received.

On the other hand, we feel a need to revitalize our First Day School Committee; we feel we should do a better job of remaining in contact with young families who are no longer attending regularly; and we need to be publicly making opportunities for children to learn about Quaker values.

We are glad that we now increasingly coordinate activities with Strawberry Creek Meeting and Berkeley Friends Church, and that members of all three congregations participate in one another’s group activities.

The **Livermore Worship Group**, which has for several years operated under the care of Berkeley Meeting, decided to pause in its operation last December. We hope that it will be active again in the near future.

**Our Meeting home:** As of this writing, our beautiful meetinghouse appears to be within weeks of completion of at least the major renovations that have occupied so much of our
attention over recent years, as the last remaining areas of the premises return to full usability. Even so, we recognize that significant enhancements still remain to be done, including, for example, our intended but not yet accomplished addition of rooftop solar panels as an act of environmental witness.

We were greatly relieved to finally resolve the last of the issues with the County Assessor’s office about our property tax exemption, although the constraints that this necessitated on permissible uses of our facilities have at times strained our relations with some groups we have hosted.

We celebrated the three years of residence by Kylin Navarro Burger and Eric Burger who have now left our area, and we welcome the energy and warmth of our new Resident Friends, Jessie Mitchell and Keenan Lorenzato.

**Witness in Action:** An unexpected bonus from our nation’s unwelcome political climate has been a greatly energized engagement of the Meeting family with social and environmental issues, especially with the leadership of our Social and Environmental Action Committee. One sign of this is that the SEACCommittee will have 20 members beginning in June. Berkeley Meeting Friends have initiated an advocacy team as inspired by FCL and FCNL, have formed an accompaniment team for an immigrant family impacted by adverse immigration policies, have prodded us as individuals and as a community to be more aware and active on environmental issues. We learned from a representative of the Ohlone people, who were stewards of our region longs before non-native settlers arrived, and we are beginning to support their work for community respect for their history and culture. We have joined with other area Quakers in several acts of public witness and resistance. Our long-standing vigil against nuclear weapons at the UC Berkeley campus continues twice weekly.

We are looking forward to the next phase in our meeting, now being able to enjoy the renovated meeting house, and using it for the actions and activities that need to be done to make the world a better place, one small step at a time.

Even in the midst of the interpersonal stresses we sometimes experience, we feel the presence of Spirit in our Meetings for Worship, and in all aspects of our Meeting life, in ways that fill our hearts and lives.
Central Coast
State of the Meeting 2018

This last year brought some changes to our Meeting. Some were greeted with happiness, others with sadness. We continue to explore our Quaker process and learn to be flexible in the running of our Meeting. We strive to grow in our spiritual journeys and encourage this in each other.

There were several events that marked our year. Our retreat this year was led by Jim Hall of Seattle and Scott Bell of Fairbanks, Alaska. The title was Deepening Spiritual Practice. Many felt deeply affected by our retreat. Some carried the effects with them long after the retreat ended.

There were other activities that struck a chord with many, one of which was a visit with John Calvi. Several people are reading his book and find it helpful.

We had another death of a young adult who grew up in the Meeting. Her death was caused by complications due to drug addiction. We were very saddened by her death. We found that our community has a great deal of compassion, love and strength as we came together to support the family. The Meeting has been greatly affected by this epidemic of opioid abuse and we are looking at ways we can help in our local community.

Meeting for worship is still the most important part for nearly everyone. The spiritual sharing groups have been going strong and growing. They have become vital for those who participate. We have purchased an annual pass to events at the Ben Lomond Quaker Center for the last two years and have rarely seen it go unused. This pass has been used by many and greatly appreciated. Worship sharing, community days and committee work also continue to support our Meeting.

We are stumped, as many Meetings are, as to how to garner more participation in the work of the Meeting. We have talked about the joy of doing committee work and sharing that joy as a means to encourage new committee members. Also, we are trying to discover the gifts of individual Friends and asking them to share those gifts in the form of committee work. Our lives are busy and adding one more task seems too much at times. We will continue to explore this problem and try new ideas.

The Meeting is exploring ways to encourage our spiritual journeys. We know that Meeting for Worship is the cornerstone but there are other activities that also help. We would like more vocal ministry. It has been suggested that we do more worship sharing or adult education, such as Quakerism 101 to learn more about Quaker history and process. We think that the retreat, spiritual sharing groups and the Quaker Center pass are all good ways to help with our journeys.

We look forward to the future with a desire to grow as a Meeting and individually in our spirits. With new people joining us and longtime Quakers working together, we will continue to develop our community.
State of the Meeting Report, 2018

Waiting on God in silence is at the center of our lives and religious practice. Chico Friends Meeting is grateful for all that is going right. The Meeting has many caring relationships and works hard to provide regular small gatherings that provide opportunities for Friends to deepen their relationships. These include the Wednesday night midweek meeting and Quaker exploration hour, Simple Suppers, Quaker Thought & Life (adult education program), meetinghouse workdays, the book club and another reading group, and serving a monthly meal at the Torres homeless shelter.

Yet, we struggle at times with difficulties based on past histories. Some perceive that weighty Friends dominate decisions and directions. Sometimes we are unable to reconcile and people have stopped attending the Meeting on that account. We continue to search our patterns and ourselves together as we try to remedy these failings and grow into a loving community.

We reached out to members and attenders with health and legal issues to provide spiritual and practical support. We checked on members and attenders living in areas impacted by natural disasters. A clearness committee assisted a member who felt led to work in refugee camps. We found joy in learning to include a differently abled child in our Meeting community life.

We have increased adult education offerings. However, opportunities are lacking to share our spiritual lives with other Friends. We hold each other accountable in personal relationships but not necessarily in our spiritual lives. Clearness committees are an untapped resource for the Meeting.

The children’s education program struggles with low attendance. It is held together by two dedicated and energetic Friends who prepare creative programs, regardless of the number of children who might show up.

Meeting for Worship provides deep quality in the silence and in moving vocal ministry. It is what draws us to the community; with some Friends reporting that they feel more settled after the Meeting for Worship. This year, we experimented with two-hour Meetings for Worship on fifth Sundays. Many of those who attended spoke of the deeper worship that resulted from this and we plan to continue this practice in the coming year. We also experimented with a Meeting for Worship outdoors in Bidwell Park last summer.

While we strive to have a Meeting for Business held as a Meeting for Worship, that goal is only sometimes met. Business gets done, and reports from committees and individuals are heard. Often, but not always, we are considerate of different views, coming to a decision only when we have found unity. We need to remind ourselves that a lack of unity gives us room to grow and that hard Meetings for Business aren’t failures; we learn from these difficult discussions. We need to rejuvenate from difficult meetings, and have one-on-one conversations with each other as Friends.

Simplicity in Quaker usage has meant putting God first, which is a struggle in a busy world. We need to prioritize our activities, not feel obliged to attend everything, but make the time to join in where we sense we are called to participate. Generally, gatherings and activities occur in an orderly manner, helped by our newsletter, email announcements, website and Facebook page.

Owning a building impacts the Meeting’s time, energy and resources. The long-range planning process became stalled; deeper questions were found that are still unresolved. Some feel that we need to reconsider the benefits of owning rather than renting a place to meet.
Dealing with issues related to homelessness in our neighborhood and the broader community continue to be a concern. We spent time this year revising our guidelines to ensure that they reflect our Quaker values. Helping those without housing is a growing focus for the Meeting. Many of us volunteer with the Safe Space Winter Shelter and a member of the Meeting organized other Friends to provide a week of meals for this program at another church. The Meeting serves over 2,000 dinners to the homeless each year. The Meeting has also readopted regular participation in the weekly Peace Vigil in downtown Chico.

The past year has seen an increasing number of new attenders, some of whom appear to be moving toward a long-term commitment to the Meeting. We need to consider ways that we can welcome and sustain the connection with people who visit the Meeting on their own. We strive to be an open and welcoming Meeting, with a welcoming brochure and outreach to the LGBT community. We again had a booth at Chico LGBT Pride Day to continue our outreach to this community.

We got new Quaker t-shirts that can be worn when participating in activities and events. To celebrate the tenth anniversary of moving to our building, we invited our neighbors to join us. The local Alternatives to Violence Project council meets monthly in our meetinghouse and we are glad to provide them space for their good work.

Approved Meeting for Business, 4/8/2018
How do we feel the Spirit moving in our midst?

We feel Spirit moving in our Meetings for Worship, giving rise to profound silence and brief, meaningful vocal ministry. As Spirit gathers us together, it creates a pool of peace that settles through our community, described by one member as “golden”, and its calm remains with us. We are blessed by newcomers and visitors and we notice that turnover among visitors and attenders seems somewhat high. As a Meeting we continue to look at ways we can improve welcoming newcomers to the Meeting as we consider why some people come to our Meeting but often don’t return. We are also implementing new ideas designed to support deeper connections between and among all ages in our meeting as well as with our visitors, while having a good time in getting to know each other better.

While attendance holds steady at 25 – 40, the faces change. Our Meeting lost two beloved people during the year - Eric Conn, a long-time attender, and Grace Noda, one of the founding members of Davis Friends Meeting. We miss the presence of both of these dear Friends, and realize that part of our Meeting history has gone with them.

We are thrilled with the regular attendance of new families, and we hold them in the Light as we rethink our children’s program. Old traditions are honored while new ideas are brought forward tenderly. What does it mean to be an intergenerational faith community? We are experimenting with a semi-programmed Family Worship on 5th Sundays, bringing the children, sometimes as many as 11, to share the experience of worship that we value so much. Revising our Child Abuse Prevention Policy and renaming it the Safe Child Policy, reminds us that children in our Meeting is a wonderful gift that we must nurture and protect.

Our Second Hours have provided us with special opportunities for connection, deepening our understanding and experience of the Spirit and informing us about social justice issues. A workshop on “working with the Children’s Program” exposed us all to strategies for planning lessons and activities and inspired some to sign up to teach on a Sunday. We hosted Ingrid Hogle of Strawberry Creek Meeting who shared with us her participation in an FCNL sponsored advocacy group and inspired several Friends to pursue this possibility locally. We held a joyful Baby Blessing to welcome Ricardo Allen Quiros and Jeremiah Obodo-Eckblad Smith, a new child and new grandchild in the Meeting.

We seek to hold our committee meetings as Meetings for Worship on the occasion of Business by opening each with silent worship, then “check-in with a current joy or challenge. We endeavor to engage with candid sharing and deep listening. The responsibility and joy in holding the Meeting and all its functions and participants in loving light belongs to all committees, not just the Worship and Ministry and the Oversight committees.

We answer the call of Spirit in service to our Meeting. While we have a significant number of people not in listed service roles, there are a number of others performing multiple recognized tasks (often three or more roles). We want to right this imbalance, both in distributing work equitably and in acknowledging the variety of ways that Friends contribute to the Meeting community. We are concerned about finding individual and corporate balance: not spreading ourselves too thin while addressing the core functions of a Monthly Meeting and including everyone in meaningful ways. We also notice that the ratio of enrolled members to attenders is rather low: What does this say about the
value of membership as a concept within our Meeting? How does this influence our discernment about filling roles that are traditionally saved for members? These are questions that continue to engage us.

Spirit moves us individually and corporately to **live outwardly** the Truth revealed to us. We continue to support Friends in their leadings, and we clarified the process for the Meeting to give financial support to a leading and to an individual. We were engaged in the Fall with discerning how to respond to conflict in the larger community. How do we continue in the spirit of offering sanctuary to people at risk? After much discernment and seasoning, we developed a Minute (“Invitation on a Call to Love Everyone”) which reminded us as a Meeting and as individuals to remember that love is the first motion and to be guided by compassion in our service to others. Our Meeting has participated in financially supporting DACA students, the Ibi Peoples’ Clinic in Nigeria, and providing bus tickets so people experiencing homelessness can get to medical and social services. People in our Meeting were in actively involved in local immigration issues and AVP training in prisons. Our Outreach Committee has been active in choosing and presenting to the larger community a movie once a month on a topic of social or environmental justice.

We take responsibility for the stewardship of our property by maintaining our peaceful garden, developing plans for our front yard, and attending to the maintenance and upkeep of our meetinghouse.

We have upgraded the electrical system making the meetinghouse safer, and we have plans to paint the exterior of our building which is overdue. The Meeting library has received a much needed pruning to make the space more usable, inviting and accessible with particular concern and interest for our youngest members and their needs. Our meetinghouse is well used by regular weekly community groups of various kinds. Since we are not acting as the Intake Center for the Interfaith Rotating Winter Shelter this year, we support the shelter in other ways.

We continue to work to **steward the resources** of the Meeting and to be explicit regarding what we have and what we spend our resources on. We were challenged by our Finance Committee to consider putting our money where our values are. As Friends (and our Meetinghouse) age, we need to discern what we can do and what we will need to ask or pay others to do. Is money a tool or a distraction in our progress towards simplicity and equality?

We are reminded of the need to take an overall view of the Meeting while asking the entire Meeting to take on the responsibility of attending to the **particular needs of individuals**, e.g. transportation needs in getting to Meeting, attention for an ill member, support for a family suffering loss. In the same way, we ask our entire Meeting participants to attend to their leadings of the Spirit and to be guided by clearness committees. We also continue to encourage people to use the resources we have to help us grow spiritually, e.g. Ben Lomond pass, and our scholarship fund. These have been under-utilized.

How do we feel the Spirit moving in our midst? Gently and persistently guiding our actions, calming our fears, and stirring us to greater love.

In the Light,
Nan Rowan, Clerk
Davis Friends Meeting

An Open, Welcoming, and Affirming Meeting
Delta Monthly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends

Judith Bunting, Clerk
P. O. Box 387
Jackson, CA 95642

State of the Meeting Report / 2017

Greetings to Friends everywhere from Delta Monthly Meeting.

Meeting has experienced a year of changes, reflections and searches for ways forward as many of us age and become less active in Friends activities than in our past.

Meeting numbers remain small but steady, our Foothill worship sites continue to meet and to serve the needs of more distant Friends. The Stockton worship group meets regularly, as well, giving us all more opportunities for worship and community.

This past year, Meeting has moved from the Pacific Complementary Medicine Center in Stockton, our home for many years, as the Center was sold. Friends have not felt called to quickly find a new site, so we meet in Friends homes, a warm and comfortable alternative, ever deepening our sense of silence and worship.

Most Friends in Delta Meeting are feeling the extra challenges associated with aging. Several are traveling less, some have given up driving. Health issues often require more limited activities. A few are homebound.

At the same time, Friends reach out to each other more, our quality of worship is cherished and deep. There is a strong collective sense of humor in Meeting, and we still hold delicious potlucks. Monthly Meeting is an opportunity for worship, good food and conversation. Younger members and attenders bring an energy and Light that we love.

Some Delta Friends hold concerns that Meeting has become much less involved in both Quarterly and Yearly Meetings. Few get to the Gatherings. It is often difficult for older Friends to negotiate the hills and uneven ground, though the heart is willing.

At the same time, Meeting Friends continue to be dedicated to service in our home communities and with our extended families. Meeting financially supports many Friends causes. We remain active and current in understanding of world issues, communicating with letters both of concern and affirmation. Climate change, world justice, and peace remain dear to our hearts and minds.

One cause of special closeness to Meeting is the annual Peace Essay Contest in Stanislaus County Schools, directed by the Modesto Peace Life Center. We are long time, dedicated supporters of the effort and believe that youth today bring much hope for the world. This year’s contest addressed issues of immigration in today’s world. Delta Friends also support the newly emerging Peace Essay Contest in Stockton.

Meeting has reluctantly laid down our twice annual Witness at Lawrence Livermore National Laboratories, though we continue to support groups who are actively continuing efforts there.

Delta Meeting does continue our summer one day retreat at Calaveras Big Trees State Park, and we enjoy our yearly Christmas Gathering in the Foothills.

Meeting always welcomes visitors and has reached out to others, as we look to the future and explore ways forward in the coming years.

Judith Bunting, Clerk / April 8, 2018
In hosting a listening session to find out what members and attenders have experienced in the life of our Meeting, one commented to the shift, “a transition from activist to contemplative Meeting.” Individuals in Meeting are involved in a wide variety of things within our community, but corporately, the only involvement we have is once a month helping to prepare and serve a meal at Hospitality House.

We are aware of our membership becoming older and declining in numbers where each year Nominating has increasing difficulty in finding members and attenders to serve on a committee or be a representative.

Though we experience this past year as diminished involvement with the wider community, including PYM, Quarterly and national Quaker programs, participants in our listening session lifted up a host of events and activities that happened this past year that kindled fire and struck light in our midst.

Before Meeting for Worship, we offer opportunity to gather and sing which prompted comments like: “Music keeps me coming.” “It's my spiritual practice.” “It prepares the Meeting House and us for worship.” And the poignant comment concerning a monthly home worship experience, where we have time to sing before we move into silent worship. The elderly wife was laying on the couch sleeping. One of the participants commented afterwards, “Though she was asleep, she was singing with us!”

One of the big surprises for us this past year, in the midst of our awareness of becoming older and smaller as a Meeting, is the influx of young families and their children. (I know that sounds ironical, how can it be both ways?!). We offer an Intergenerational Program during Meeting for Worship, where children are encouraged to be present for the first ten minutes then invited to exit and have their own activity oriented program. These five new families don't come every week, but several often overlap and make for a lively group before they head out for their program and at the close meeting, when they come back to share. Together with our active young families, it sometimes makes for a group of over 12 children.

When we get very positive response and appreciation for a program, we know that what we are doing is on the mark. Like an attender who is blind sharing his appreciation for “accommodating me in Meeting For Worship.” And the comments related to our small group book discussion group, “it enriches our meeting and personal connections”, and the ongoing weekly bible study group, “how inspiring it is” and “it's acting on the spirit.”

Larger events also strike a cord in our community, like the the annual weekend retreat, which requires a big commitment. And our new monthly potlucks, hosted by a different family each month, to which someone commented “it's great for visiting and has no agenda.”

And all the acts of ministry that operate outside the Meeting radar, held as confidential, where we get personal responses like “we appreciate all the support we have received this past year.”
The most active committee this past year has been Spiritual Life, offering monthly programs and the Annual Retreat.

Meeting for Worship the listening group felt is enriching. We've had more people this past year who stand and share out of what they are struggling with, sharing out of their vulnerability and demonstrating their trust in us to honor and respect what they are saying. For some of us, it's expanded our sense of what is viable and meaningful to bring up in worship.

And, if we put our finger on what is happening, it's the personal nature of all these interactions, what is incarnated, comes alive into the light of day. Two examples: when there were forest fires in the area, the parents of two of our Intergenerational students thought not to come to meeting because of the smoke, but their children insisted that they had to go as they had things to do in the Intergenerational Program! Recently, one of these children visited one of the families that moved on campus and when he went in, saw a cabinet door that was off its hinges. He whipped out a screw driver and said “I can fix that!” And he did.

And this past year in a poignant interchange between children after reading a story on Martin Luther King, one of the children expressed confusion on how people could be so nasty to others. And another piped up “all people are valuable! God is in all of us!” And a little girl commented “I know there is a God because she talks to me every day and I talk to her!” And their teacher responded “Me too!”

And the word becomes flesh and dwells among us, often coming from unexpected places and in surprising ways.

Dean Olson
Clerk
Humboldt Friends Meeting
State of the Meeting 2017

Our Seekers Discussion Group continues to spiritually enrich our community before First Day Worship. In it we explore topics that help us express ourselves and know each other while deepening silent worship. Quaker history and practice are also discussed at Seekers which supports spiritual depth in the Meeting for Worship and renewed reverence in the Meeting for Business.

Topics at Seekers in 2017 included chapters from Steve Smith’s *Eastern Light, Awakening to Presence in Zen, Quakerism and Christianity*, and Howard Brinton’s *Quaker Journals* expanding our viewpoint outward to other spiritual traditions and probing the beginnings of our own.

Our Annual Weekend Retreat continues to foster community, spiritual sharing and getting to know each other better. Many Friends express gratitude for a weekend away together in community with a spiritual focus.

The health of our good friend and long-time attender Bill Spencer declined over this last year. While spending some time in a long-term care facility, Friends coordinated visits to him, bringing food, entertainment and love. He passed away in October. By the end of the year, we began organizing a memorial meeting for Bill’s family while inviting his many friends from Alcoholics Anonymous as well. Over fifty people attended Bill’s memorial.

Meeting for Business has focused on holding a worshipful presence this year, thanks to quotes chosen by the Clerk and a renewed effort to improve sharing by going through the Clerk instead of open discussion. This is a challenge when the attendance is small but a certain flexibility is indicated for topics not needing a decision.

We have enjoyed the presence of children this year and plan to involve more adults in First Day School. The attendance of young families energizes our community.

Some Friends feel that we need a prophetic vision for reaching out to the community. Young people especially might be inclined to participate if we had a vibrant political presence in the wider world.

Friends expressed a wish for more music in our activities. Suggestions were made to improve the quality of our singing.

[There] have been five new members. In a small meeting, this is a significant increase. We are grateful for new energy and perspective as well as the current attendance of young families and younger adults.
Greetings from the Mendocino Friends Meeting in Caspar, California. We continue to hold an unprogrammed meeting each Sunday morning at 10 a.m. at the Caspar Shul, where we share space with the local Jewish community. At the beginning of our silent worship, the clerk reads a quote from a Quaker, usually based on Friends’ testimony topics. Following 45 minutes of silence, we discuss a topic that comes up naturally from the Meeting for Worship, except for first Sundays when one of the members or attenders gives their spiritual journey. We continue to be blessed by a financial benefactor who has allowed us to increase our yearly donations to both Quaker and local organizations.

Our Meeting has gained a new member this year who is now clerk. We average about 12 people, but have had up to 24, with swells during tourist season or after violent events. One of our longtime members usually opens, sets up and closes the meeting, while another faithful member provides snacks and yet another makes tea. Many stay afterwards to enjoy one another’s company in the kitchen and write post cards to political representatives about both local and wider-based issues that speak to the Quaker principle: There is that of God in everyone.

Our worship remains weighty, reflective and deeply satisfying. We feel closely knit and are gaining new insights into one another’s lives as each week passes. As we struggle individually and collectively to respond to the current political climate, while still remaining open to all perspectives, we gain strength from and depend on the Light to fill us.
Palo Alto Friends Meeting
State of the Meeting Report 2018

Palo Alto Friends Meeting is in many ways as it has been for many years: among the largest in PYM, a focal point for the lives of its community members, filled with activity, leavened with worship, struggling with how to serve the needs of all our members, growing in some ways and not in others.

Palo Alto Meeting is enjoying its second year of working within a new committee structure. After much thought about the multiplicity of committees (a total of 16), we drastically reduced the number of standing committees to six and changed the names to help us think differently about the functions they serve: Ministry & Counsel, Property & Finance, Religious Education, Work in the World, Meeting Life, Communications & Records. A 7th committee, Nominating, proposes members for the other six. In addition to the committee charges, the first 6 also serve as umbrellas for Working Groups, many of which used to be committees. Working Groups may be permanent (First Day School), transient (retreat planning), or periodic (Quaker Harvest Festival planning). New working groups may be initiated under the care of a committee by individuals with personal leadings or by Meeting as a whole when a need arises. Individuals who do not want to commit to a committee may feel more comfortable volunteering for a working group. Overall, the Meeting has adjusted to the new structure. A temporary Transition Committee has been charged with making sure nothing essential is left undone.

Nominating still seeks effective ways to fill committees. The core 40 or so members of our Meeting who tried to fill the former 16 committees have more-or-less became the new officers and members of the 6 new committees. Some people did not understand the function of the new committees and felt their connection to Meeting service had been lost. While monthly events are published in the newsletter, some Friends still seem to be unclear on how to engage. We have requests for a complete monthly calendar of events and for better transparency about urgent needs. In general, though, we seem to be doing what we are called to do. The Transition Committee has not noted serious gaps in either Meeting operations or our work in the world. The experiment continues.

One of our perceptions is that we are getting smaller. In truth our membership is only about 10% smaller than 5 years ago. Still, we perceive a slow decline in active participation. Our membership is aging. The attention turns to how to engage newcomers. We are doing a lot of things right: approaching our visitors during after-Meeting snacks and inviting them to participate in Meeting activities. Some become irregular attenders and some disappear completely. Are there ways we can better draw them into our community on a permanent basis?

For many in Meeting work in our community and our world is an essential part of our Quaker faith. Others feel that our energy would better go toward worship and spiritual development. Our response this year has been to hold public meetings for worship (one at an Immigration and Customs Enforcement facility) because they present our spiritual and our advocate faces to the public at the same time. This seems to be a Quakerly response to the extremist actions of our federal government. Some of us question if this is enough action to truly live our testimonies; others see such actions as too political. Like all compromises, it does not satisfy us. We live with this tension and try to keep our hearts open to the Spirit in hope of finding unity.

We continue Palo Alto civic action traditions that reach beyond the walls of our meeting house. They include the Harvest Festival, which has always included the San Jose Meeting and recently more active participation of other Bay Area meetings. Each December we host a rotating homeless shelter and we continue to support education in El Salvador.

For spiritual growth, we enjoy the Adult Ed programs reading and discussion group and
single presentation events. We hold a mid-week Meeting for Worship on Wednesdays. A recent change is regularly including worship sharing in Meeting for Business.

Our youth programs are significantly smaller than they were several years ago. Our teens have graduated from high school or become engaged in weekend outside activities. We miss the leadership of the teens who graduated recently. When this year's teens graduate, there will be no teen group rising up for some time to come. This is simply demographics at work.

Our First Day School is thriving, but it relies on the intensive efforts of a very few members. Meeting needs to support it better. One effort is the Kids’ Night Out. Periodically, Meeting’s kids come for dinner and games on Saturday evening. They love it, and so do the parents.

Among our blessings we count dedicated and capable clerking in this and past years. The Spring Gathering retreat at Ben Lomond was a welcome communal weekend. We have reinstated the winter "Interview a Quaker" potlucks. We have a number of dedicated members who keep the committee structure staffed. We have generous Friends who provide snacks that encourage conversation after worship (never underestimate the power of food to nurture community)! Few contentious issues have come to us this year. Or perhaps we are more tender with each other in working them out? We have welcomed some new members who bring fresh perspectives. They keep us from getting too comfortable.

Our greatest joys are still found in Meeting for Worship. The corporate worship experience has always been the center of the spiritual life of many members. It is the source for the community we feel, and it informs and supports the way we live our lives outside Meeting. Many hunger for more interaction and more training in spiritual matters. Is religious life centered in the head? The heart? The hands? It varies from person to person, so teaching and learning cannot be a one-size-fits-all. We know, though, that it is needed outside our doors. During Harvest Festival, a local woman came to us and said that the world around her felt broken and she needed to come to where caring, sane people gather. It calmed her mind. Her words touched our souls. We aspire to create an inclusive community that embraces people from many walks of life who are searching for an openly-diverse and accepting place to connect with the Spirit.

**Appendix of Meeting activities**

- Chamber music concert to support FCLCA
- Spring Gathering retreat at Ben Lomond Quaker Center
- Fall one-day retreat at Meeting House
- Harvest Festival to support FCLCA (includes a teen retreat)
- Hotel deZink homeless shelter
- Public meetings for worship
- Kids’ Night Out
- First Day School
- Teen Meeting (twice monthly)
- Adult Education
- Quaker interviews (potluck followed by an interview with a surprise member of PAFM)
- Friendly 8 dinners
- El Salvador Committee
- Buildings and Grounds workdays
- Ice Cream social
- Pi(e) Day
- Host of Christian Friends Conference
The Reno Friends Monthly Meeting (RFM) strives to deeply care for and nurture its members and attenders, beyond those present in Worship. At the same time RFM continues to increase its outreach and impact on the greater Reno community.

We are fortunate to have a solid foundation of membership and infrastructure, allowing us to gather in silent worship and conduct the business of our Meeting. We continued several years of growth with more new attenders in 2018 and are exploring ways to encourage and facilitate their ongoing contributions. We have improved our follow-up with newcomers through timely hand-written cards and phone calls and hosted a breakfast for newcomers early in the year.

We also hold in the Light infirm Friends and make efforts to stay in touch with and support them. We miss Ricki Ann Jones, a faithful member of Meeting who touched each one of us before she left her earthly body. We supported her and her family during her final months and held a memorial service to honor and celebrate her life and legacy. Two lavender plants grow on the west side of our Meeting House to remind us of Ricki’s Light.

Our Buildings and Grounds committee continues to enhance our compact but somewhat complex property with its three structures. This year, we installed new outdoor lighting and gutters, upgraded sprinklers to better manage our water usage, and pruned our box elder, one of our largest trees. Our annual spring and fall clean-ups are a joyous time for us to participate in collective care of our space. We demonstrate our fiscal responsibility for our property by appropriating $2,000 to a reserve fund every year.

We have revitalized and empowered our committee work and leadership to strengthen our Meeting and enhance its impact and spiritual growth. The Peace and Social Concerns Committee organized a worship-sharing to identify RFM outreach priorities. In response, the committee initiated a regular effort of making and serving food for a local charity’s dinners for the homeless. This has supported both fellowship among us and with Reno’s homeless and economically disadvantaged population. We also partnered with another local non-profit to co-sponsor a small but mighty clean-up of a paved trail near the Meeting House where homeless people congregate. We held our second warm clothing drive and distributed the contributions on Christmas Eve Day along with bagged lunches provided by an attender and his family. In an effort to expand our knowledge of social and economic issues, we held a six-week Climate Change Discussion Group. We also continued our core financial support of the Nevada volunteers who lead our state’s Alternatives to Violence Project, offering workshops in Nevada and northern California prisons.

We are grateful to have sent members to Quarterly Meetings, and Ben Lomond’s Spiritual Centering Workshop. These Friends return with information and activities to share from the wider Quaker community, deepening our understanding and practice of The Society of Friends. We recognize that there are areas of Quaker process where we can improve and appreciate those who bring forth questions and suggestions.

Our social activities have been very well attended this past year. One attender hosted an Easter potluck and hike, and another hosted a Christmas evening with music and caroling, both opportunities for us to celebrate each other and the season. We joined with the Carson City Worship Group to camp at the Grover Hot Springs Park in the fall. We are grateful for the opportunity to gather and enjoy the beauty and weather that Reno offers while celebrating the rhythms of the year.
In an effort to deepen our spiritual experience, we held a series of classes on Quakerism 101, which was well-attended and gave us a chance to better understand our Testimonies. Our First Day School, which had few children the year before, has seen more young children participating during the Fall of 2017, and we hope that will continue this next year. We continue to engage our First Day School teacher and are looking at ways to reach more young Friends.

We are grateful for the opportunity to grow and stretch in all areas and strive to see the Light in everyone.

Respectfully Submitted
Gina Russo, Clerk of Ministry & Oversight
Wendy Swallow, RFM Clerk
Santa Cruz Friends Meeting - State of the Meeting 2017

“Responsibility for this ministry of love and service cannot be left to others. It rests upon each one of us, by action and in prayer, to make human need our own wherever we may find it, being quick to see, and moved to respond, as God gives us the vision and the opportunity.” -- from Christian Faith and Practice in the experience of the London Yearly Meeting

2017 was a year of increased political activism in our Meeting, with a focus on Spirit-led action.

Our Peace and Social Justice Committee sponsored a community meeting, “What are Friends Doing for Social Justice?” The Meeting also approved a minute in support of Water Protectors at Standing Rock. After a strong start, the Committee lost its momentum and became inactive. The Meeting, however, continued to work on a variety of peace and social justice issues.

For the second year, our Meeting held a rummage sale benefitting FCLCA. Our FCNL Advocacy Team continues to make lobbying visits, both in Washington, D.C. and at home, as well as keeping us informed and involved in legislative issues. The Team sponsored a table at a local Activist Fair following the Women’s March in January. Friends participated in this march, as well as marches celebrating Martin Luther King Day and Pride Day.

Our Meeting has become more active in wider Quaker action, taking part in initiatives sponsored by AFSC, FCLCA, and PYM. An exciting project for our Meeting, co-sponsored by our local WILPF chapter, is a seven-part community television series developed and presented by one of our members titled “The Future We Need… and How to Get it.” The focus is on the spiritual grounding of our political activism.

We have become increasingly active in caring for homeless people, collaborating with three different shelter programs. Working with, serving, and getting to know these members of our community has been a gift to many of us.

Our Friends in Unity with Nature Committee wrote a moving minute about the environmental harm the proposed border wall could cause. This minute was taken to PYM, and from there to Mexico City Meeting. We embarked on a project to channel storm water into a well to recharge the local aquifer. Our intention is that this project will be a model of water stewardship for the broader community. We gathered together for seasonal nature walks. We are blessed to live where we can enjoy the mystery and beauty of nature from the ocean to the redwood forests.

Increased usage of the Meetinghouse and parking lot by the wider community has led the Finance and Buildings & Grounds committees to propose a resident caretaker.

Attendance at our annual retreat had fallen, so we joined with San Jose Meeting and Live Oak Meeting for a weekend of fellowship, fun, and spiritual refreshment. We had such a good time that we are doing the same thing in 2018.

We start worship an hour earlier on the first and third Sundays of each month. The extended time allows us to go deeper, providing a stronger container to hold each other. We continued
our Spiritual Companions program. Each pair of companions shares what is spiritually alive for them and where they are struggling.

In July, a member of our Meeting pled guilty to possession of child pornography and seven counts of child molestation. Friends visited and worshipped with this Friend in jail. As a Meeting, we deferred to the legal process, putting our own Quaker process with respect to this member on hold. Our inability or unwillingness to move forward created a lack of clarity and unity in the Meeting. Some Friends interpreted the support of the accused person as a lack of support for the Meeting’s children and other vulnerable individuals.

After our member pled guilty, there was an outpouring of emotions, beliefs, and opinions. In view of the profound grief and anger expressed by many members of our community, we decided to enlist the services of a well-respected Quaker healer. He met with Friends individually, facilitated a threshing session, and led us in a Meeting for Healing.

This experience and its profound effect on the meeting prompts us to be mindful of the ways we tend the emotional and spiritual well being of our community, especially those to whom we have been insufficiently attentive. We are also reminded of our most basic Quaker charge and responsibility: answering that of God in each of us, no matter how flawed and imperfect we are.

One thing is clear: we need to devote more time and attention to the children and families in our meeting. We have a renewed commitment to create a vibrant First Day Program. Friends across the Meeting are considering how we can serve families and children, and how we can better incorporate young people into Meeting activities.

As we work together to put our faith into practice, we trust that, with loving kindness, compassion and forgiveness, we will come to know one another more intimately and to serve one another with greater affection, honesty and understanding.
A sense of Spirit continues to move among us, pushing us to speak in Meeting for Worship, helping us to make decisions in our Meeting for Business, and encouraging us to try new structures. We feel hope for our Meeting, for the way that Truth is leading us, and for the community we are building. Some deeply appreciate the Meeting community as we strive to reignite our own connection with the Divine; others feel the presence of God in many ways, including in the children of this Meeting.

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

While there is electricity and energy in our meeting, some of it no longer channels through existing structures. The electrical metaphor helps us to understand changes in our Meeting. For example, some of our older, incandescent energy sources are burning out; there are some vibrant new LEDs, but they need new ways through which to channel their bright energy. Nominating continues to have difficulty filling standing committees. Our new energy seems more open to accomplishing short-term projects -- including a wonderful, spontaneous-feeling fall retreat -- rather than committing to a year on a standing committee. Other examples include a new set of Friendly 7’s, worship sharing groups, the Quaker Action Worship Group, support for people in the Caribbean after the hurricanes, and new energy for action, inside and outside of committees. It is vitally important that we both seek and be open to new structures and new ways of connecting.

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

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

Some time ago Oversight was laid down and two committees, Care of the Meeting and Mutual Care, were put in place. We are aware that this change should be studied, knowing that we are still not meeting everyone’s needs. Mutual Care strives to help individuals who are struggling while not intruding where there is sensitivity. It is a difficult balance. Our Meeting community is strengthened and enriched by the care members give to each other during times of difficulty. The First Day Children’s Program provides a wonderfully bright light to the Meeting; people greatly enjoyed and appreciated their work on and presentation of the Quaker Testimonies. We are also grateful for a large family whose children reliably come to Meeting; this allows the First Day Children’s program teachers to plan ahead and to know there will be children to teach. Additional support for and connection with this program is valued and needed. We now save a
row of seats for the children, parents and teachers; and during announcements they share with the Meeting what they did during their hour.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Lake County Worship Group continues under the pastoral care of Redwood Forest Monthly Meeting. We are a small group of Friends spread over a three county area in rural Northern California, though the majority of us reside full time in Lake County. We gather weekly for worship, the location generally in a set rotation amongst our homes. In general, on first and fifth Sundays we are in Lower Lake, second Sunday Lakeport, third Clearlake, and fourth Redwood Valley. Meeting for Worship is now usually set for 11 AM Sundays, with a potluck to follow. Our Meetings for Worship are small, sometimes as few as only two in attendance, other times as many as 10. We range in age from ‘active seniors’ to two preschoolers among our regular attenders. Our worship is generally in the manner of unprogramed Friends, but we do periodically gather for Meeting for Worship on the occasion of Song. We were for a time experimenting with an evening Meeting for Worship on line, the Friday prior to the first Sunday, but that was laid down last fall for lack of participation. Our weekly gatherings in person serve both our spiritual and community needs better.

We currently have no committees or officers, save for one Friend who currently serves as our treasurer; we are small enough that we can serve as a committee of the whole. At least three of us are active with our parent meeting in Santa Rosa and are there for the first Sunday of each month for committee meetings. We have begun having Meeting for Worship on the Occasion of Business again this last fall. We had previously scheduled Business Meeting to happen three times per year, though that had ‘slipped’ through our institutional memory for a bit. We have revived the practice and have had Business Meeting again this past month.

At our last Business Meeting it was decided to set up a Yahoo Group to foster our communication, as a few other Meetings have done. Most of us are now part of that online group which allows us to easily get emails from any of us, out to all of us in a timely manner. It is now being used to get both minutes and agendas for business meeting out to all, as well as sharing information any of us gets from other Quaker organizations. So far this looks like it will meet our needs in lieu of a Meeting Newsletter.

In the past year we have gathered unsprayed walnuts from a local orchard and have often been shelling them after potlucks, with the intent of using their sale for fundraising for our Worship Group making donations to charitable causes within our larger Lake County community as well as to other Quaker organizations.