

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA QUARTERLY MEETING State of Meeting Reports

Claremont Friends Meeting

Since our 2012 State of the Meeting Report, Claremont Friends Meeting has experienced two broad trends, seemingly at odds with each other yet intimately intertwined. One is a familiar strand: diminishing numbers and higher average age of regular attenders, greater difficulty in filling committee rosters and officer positions, heavier concentration of Meeting responsibilities upon the shoulders of a dwindling number of able members. Visitors to our Meeting may at first notice only this dimension: a worthy assemblage of kindly and concerned retirees, salted with a few children and their parents.

Yet look a bit deeper, and another picture emerges. Thanks to the enterprising efforts of a few younger adults and an indispensable octogenarian, we see fresh, exciting initiatives thrusting up through the encrustations of age, unsettling and inspiring us all—a complex initiative to reach out to the most needy in our community, the homeless. Members of the Meeting are assembling a Claremont coalition of faith groups and other concerned Claremont residents (including members of the City Council itself) to locate resources to support basic human needs of the homeless. Some in our Meeting have gone further, taking two local homeless men under their care, including the time-consuming labor of helping them to acquire necessary documentation and find low-cost housing.

Some in the same group are offering moral and spiritual support to transgender civil detainees who are being held by Immigration and Customs Enforcement—individuals whose special needs have not been properly addressed. Friends' historical reputation as trustworthy advocates for prisoners is literally opening doors for the creation of a small worship group within jail walls.

These initiatives are not merely the quixotic efforts of a few at the fringes of our Meeting, but have been embraced within our Meeting for Business, which has created appropriate structures of support for these initiatives, buoying up those most actively involved. The encouragement and support of the Meeting are vital to the work; one most actively involved said, "Your interest keeps us going." This hopeful growth comes in the wake of a three-year effort to heal rifts within our community, helping to restore trust and harmony. Without that labor of rebuilding our corporate spiritual health, we might not have united behind the initiatives that we now prize.

In recent months there has been relatively little vocal ministry in Meeting for Worship—yet the rich depth of our silence draws us together nonetheless, and attracts several attenders from nearby retirement communities. The challenge of sustaining our Children's Meeting falls disproportionately upon the parents of the children; here also we see signs of renewal, and greater involvement in this vital dimension of our community. In recent Meetings for Worship on the Occasion of Business we have sometimes failed to observe good order. With broad Meeting support we are making fresh efforts to address that concern. A monthly adult education group is working through Pacific Yearly Meeting's book of *Faith and Practice*. Our website needs a major overhaul, as we look for better ways to announce our presence to younger persons throughout our area.

The two strands of age and renewal within Claremont Friends Meeting are *not* separate. Support and blessing by elders is vital to the success of those who are actively engaged in outreach. As Friends have known from the beginning of our history, we function best not as solitary individuals, but from within a blessed community in which each person is treasured, and has his or her own essential place.

Conejo Valley Worship Group

Under the care of Orange Grove Monthly Meeting

We are still a small, committed group of Friends who gather on the first and third First Days of each month. We continue to meet at California Lutheran University, which makes it possible for students from religion classes to attend from time to time. We enjoy fellowship and food after the rise of meeting. In addition we have been meeting on the fifth First Day for hikes or potlucks to strengthen our community.

We have no children attending regularly so First Day School remains suspended.

We enjoyed our annual visit from Friends of Orange Grove for a Meeting for Worship and a potluck at one Friend's home.

We welcomed a visit from an Australian Friend.

We discontinued a listing in the religious section of the local newspaper, instead relying on the internet for people to find us.

We joined Santa Barbara Meeting and Ojai Worship Group again at a day retreat at Channel Islands Harbor in September. We found this rewarding and fun. We appreciated the invitation to take part in this mini cluster.

We found spiritual renewal at the Spring Quarterly Gathering in Riverside as well as the Fall Fellowship at Temescal Canyon.

Several members contribute time and talent to the Afghan Girls' Schools. Friends remain active in interfaith and ecumenical ministries in Ventura County.

Friends traveled to Ben Lomond Quaker Center for their rich and diverse programs, such as John Calvi's Healing Hands, the seminar on Elias Hicks, and "Reading the Bible with Friends".

One Friend traveled to Santa Cruz for PYM Representative Committee.

Our goals for this next year are to strengthen our fellowship, and grow spiritually. In that spirit we are experimenting with meeting on every fourth First Day in a Friend's home. We will be continuing to explore other ways to invite and engage new people to our worship group.

Inland Valley Friends Meeting

“...in you we take refuge” Psalm 16:1

We are Quakers, the hub of a many-spoked wheel, united in our desire to help others. We strive to be a safe, supportive place of nurture, an oasis of welcoming comfort, a refuge in life's storms. We share triumphs and burdens. We express ourselves here through our testimonies.

Simplicity

We are Friends: Comfortable in basic, simple surroundings, where there is no pretension and there is much welcome. We strive to be a blessing in the lives of each individual and each family.

Peace

We are Friends: Praying for patience with ourselves as well as each other. We listen to what people are saying, to respect people and their thoughts, lives, and trials—to not only acknowledge but also to value and seriously

consider other people's perspectives. We try to find solutions that unite us and to work together to seek answers. We minuted support of Senator Feinstein's gun legislation. Three of us attended the "Speaking Truth to Quakers" event at Orange Grove Meeting and appreciated the process of finding our way when dealing with conflict. Social justice groups continue to use our space to meet, and one of our attenders now works with those struggling with immigration. We rejoice in and support these efforts.

Unity and Integrity

We are Friends: This last year our members have spent much time exploring how the building of the Meeting House could let our lives speak to the Meeting and to our community. In this process we strive for unity through integrity. At the vision sessions, all were encouraged to speak their truth. Friends were heard and their ideas not only acknowledged but seriously considered and valued. In this manner we have faith that way will open.

Community

We are Friends: Our celebrations draw us together. Christmas, the New York New Year, Easter, worship at the beach, the Santa Rosa Plateau, and this year a baby welcoming! These satisfy our needs for community, but we yearn to know more about each other's lives, to learn more about what it means to be a Quaker, to find spiritual guidance and to find direction in our place of worship. We have been able to offer more dialogues this year. Our children are our joy. We realize we need to support our preteens as they outgrow regular First Day School. An attender encouraged us to look for ways to identify how we meet our testimonies through our budget. We are expanded child care support so parents can attend programs beyond Meeting for Worship.

Equality

We are Friends: Fulfilling a call to live outside ourselves, sharing passions for social justice, trying to better people's lives and redress social and legal wrongs. We appreciate what others have gone through, and we strive to better serve and extend friendship to all members of the community.

Stewardship

We are Friends: Consciously looking at how our financial decisions reflect our testimonies in the annual budget. We seek clarity about our financial practices regarding our Meeting House project and the right use of the world's resources.

La Jolla Monthly Meeting

Seeds of healing, which were carefully planted and nurtured over the past two years, continue to germinate, though some of us are still tender concerning trust issues. We felt led to make a deliberate effort to enhance the spiritual depth of Meeting through a seven-month period of Sabbath. Committees and individuals were asked to set aside what work they could and focus on how they could contribute to the spiritual growth of Meeting.

The Sabbath period was launched with a special retreat in which f/Friends created a menu of items that could enhance their growth in the Spirit. Each individual was asked to make a personal commitment. Adult Religious Education Committee offered rich and well researched monthly topics for discussion. At our annual retreat, we learned about different ways in which f/Friends find the Spirit. Spiritual Journey talks continue to be very popular and we are blessed with a thriving mid-week worship group, a men's group, an Artist's Way group and spiritual friendships. An annual pass to Ben Lomond events has increased participation in its programs. While some f/Friends were unaware of the Sabbath and it was often hard to put business aside, many reported a deepening in their spirituality, and that Meeting for Worship feels more Spirit led.

Attendance at Meeting for Worship and Meeting for Worship on the Occasion of Business has increased though demographics are changing. There are fewer elders but we are blessed with a number of new attenders in their 20's to 40's. Most significantly, many of our teens are transitioning to young adulthood with fewer youths to replace them. To support our teens, Meeting hosted the Quaker Center Peace Action Camp and helped a teen

attend the Quaker Youth Pilgrimage. Children's Religious Education has been offering a strong program with younger children to increase attendance.

Our committees are revitalized. Our library has been transformed with new multi-media resources; book reviews in our newsletter entice participation. Community Committee has taken seriously its charge to build community. We embarked on a long-term plan for property improvement that began with an evaluation by a home inspector. With a generous gift from the family of a deceased friend, we have a new sound system to improve our ability to hear messages. Meeting approved entering a limited liability corporation to develop a bequest of an estate. Communications have improved with new office equipment and additions to our website.

It has been said that a strength of our Meeting is that we have f/Friends whose primary interest is social action and f/Friends who are involved in spiritual nourishment. Individual f/Friends lead a wide variety of peace and social action projects that other f/Friends help support, but our perennial desire for a Meeting-wide project has not been met. Friends are involved in ending war, prison work, homeless outreach, immigration reform, service to wounded soldiers and vets, the Islamic Center, global warming, ending the death penalty, blankets for cancer patients, the Occupy movement, political funding reform, and programs in Tijuana. Many f/Friends marched in the Martin Luther King and Gay Pride parades. We worked well together in hosting Representative Committee.

Friends have benefitted from an enormous amount of caring. We are struggling with placement of Joys and Concerns with respect to worship, but we are listening more carefully to each other. Our community has come together to provide financial, practical and spiritual assistance to several f/Friends who are seriously ill.

We hope that the spiritual deepening stressed throughout the Sabbath period has increased trust and will allow us to apply our deepened spirituality to outward concerns as well.

Marloma Long Beach Monthly Meeting

Marloma Long Beach Monthly Meeting continues to maintain its stability with six reliable Quakers in attendance and occasional visitors both locally and from afar. One who moved elsewhere returns occasionally, to our great joy. A new couple worshipped with us for several meetings before they left for a year-long sojourn abroad, promising to return in the future. We had several interesting young people, one of whom came regularly for a couple of months and brought in his friends. Meanwhile we regulars have become close as a tiny community of Quakers. As one of our members noted, "We didn't go backward this year."

For the past year we have been called upon to help out one of the inner-city families, a young couple with three preschool children who came to meeting frequently. In time the couple became homeless. Much of the meeting's time, energy and money was devoted to helping in any way we could. Ultimately the couple decided to go to Ohio, since which our meetings for worship have become less stressful and not as lively.

There was a change in ownership of our site this year. The transition to the agreeable new landlord has gone smoothly, even resulting in a reduction in our rent. At times we have been surrounded by building improvements as we worship, but that has been kept to a minimum.

A very dear Friend and former Clerk of our meeting, Helen Gutkin (now deceased), used to say, "It is important that we have a Quaker presence in Long Beach." Our numbers are low, but we are maintaining that Quaker presence. Often visitors express pleasure at finding us, confirming to us the importance of our continuing to meet.

Orange County Friends Meeting

Spiritual Life of the Meeting

The Adult Religious Education program has been a source of renewal for the spiritual life of the meeting, contributing to a deeper worship, enriching ministry and fostering our collective understanding of the spiritual life and perspective of those in our community. We have active and rich ministry, and the Meeting provides an important spiritual center for our members and attenders.

The Meeting Community

We have an intergenerational religious education program on the first Sunday of the month, and this has helped to foster community and engagement with the children of the meeting. The young members of the Meeting community have formed connections, and the Meeting provides a place for children to experience growth and enjoy time spent with members of the community.

Over the past year, the Meeting has experienced a renewed sense of vitality and cohesion, with frequent activities such as a reading of a play authored by one of our members and another wonderful Christmas party. Our ongoing involvement in the Human Options project, which supports battered women and their families, has helped to nurture a sense of community. It has also provided an outreach opportunity, increasing awareness of our Quaker presence and identity.

We have been more mindful of our future, our current lease and plans for a permanent or long-term meetinghouse. We pay our bills with the help of faithful and regular contributors.

As part of a year-long focus on the testimony of community, we conducted a talking meeting where strong positive feelings about the Meeting and its meaning to members and attenders were expressed (see [OCFM on the Testimony of Community](#)). The Meeting provides a vital place for spiritual refreshment, a place to be in peace and form community connections that help foster a joyous life. The love and friendship fostered among members and attenders of the Meeting provides strength and fosters personal growth.

The monthly poetry group provides the participants with joy, insight and opportunities for spiritual expression. New members have brought wonderful gifts to the meeting, including artistry, poetry, culinary skills and children. The children's program has grown, and a young Friend who provides childcare has grown through his experience working with the children.

Challenges

The meetinghouse could be more aesthetically lively and welcoming. More attention is needed to the practical needs and concerns of the Meeting and the meetinghouse facility. The Meeting is in a delicate state with aging members and a heavy dependence on a small number who do much for the meeting, which could soon create challenges for the vitality of the meeting. Two Friends were seriously ill this year, and the Meeting held them in the light and provided strong support during their recuperation.

We seek increased engagement for our younger Friends in the life of the Meeting as they have brought a vital element to the meeting.

New Experiences and Discoveries

The center of the Meeting is its continuing focus on the people of the community rather than the structure and contents of the place of worship and outward elements.

The meeting conducted the initial session of Quaker Quest this past fall. It was helpful to consider where the Meeting is and where we might be headed. This experience provided some with a better sense of who we are as Quakers and an ability to articulate this to others. We will plan to explore our potential readiness for more

outreach and growth as we sense that many more people could benefit from engagement with our meeting community.

Orange Grove Monthly Meeting

The vitality of Orange Grove Meeting continues, maintaining a healthy number of members and attenders this year. New people continue to visit, and some stay and take up the work of the Meeting. At times we are challenged with how best to welcome newcomers, if it is our job to seek out new members, what our responsibility is to them, and how we can better help them find their role in the Meeting.

The work of committees is considered essential and we endeavor to conduct such work in accordance with what we have learned from the Quaker testimonies. Our Adult Education program is lively with discussion of a variety of topics by Orange Grove Friends, by those from the broader Quaker community, and others. One highlight this past year was the visit from Nico Wright, director of Casa de Los Amigos in Mexico City.

Successful community outreach programs continue, including a breakfast program at a local Bad Weather Shelter and providing evening meals for Union Station Homeless Services. On campus we rent space to groups such as Friends Western School, and Alcoholics Anonymous. A neighborhood Spanish literacy and ESL program uses the meetinghouse for free. The Meeting also opened dialogue with our neighbor, Messiah Lutheran Church, when its doors threatened to close this year. The Wisdom Arts Laboratory's Friday art events are well attended by our neighbors. This year the Meeting was also challenged to discern the right use of our property, as regards the homeless.

We seek to create a space that is safe, fulfills the needs of the Meeting, is welcoming to our neighbors, respects the history of the site and is environmentally friendly. We continue to maintain the main campus in the spirit of these goals, and our cemetery has benefited from ongoing improvements. After nine years of faithful service our Resident Friend is moving on, and we are in the process of selecting a new one.

Children's Education Committee serves three age groups, though the committee is currently stretched for resources because of low participation. After eight dedicated years the Children's Education Coordinator is leaving, and we seek a new coordinator.

Worship and Ministry Committee continues to discern how best to hold a waiting silence in Meeting for Worship, the cherished space which is so important to our Society. Concern from the Meeting resulted in changes to the announcement period in order that it remain focused and flow more smoothly. The role of the Announcement Clerk has also been refined accordingly. We continue to seek ways to model and nurture ministry led by the Spirit and to help Friends distinguish between messages meant for the community versus those which are self-help or cathartic in nature. The Meeting embraces a broad range of beliefs, and we are pleased that those of Christ-centered, Jewish, and other spiritual leadings feel comfortable amongst us.

The Meeting nearly did not make its budget this year, according to the Finance Committee, but in the end we were sufficiently funded and avoided paring down our outreach.

At this time we do not seem to be struggling with Meeting-wide controversies; rather, as issues arise we work to address and heal what might otherwise divide us. We trust that the Light will guide us as we discern and live-out its way for us in all aspects of the Meeting.

SAN DIEGO MONTHLY MEETING

The past year has been a year of change for San Diego Monthly Meeting. In February, 2012, after more than a decade of planning and construction, we began meeting for worship in the new Friends Center (developed in partnership with the Peace Resource Center of San Diego, the First Church of the Brethren, and the San Diego Area Program of the American Friends Service Committee). A few months later the sound quality was improved with carpeting of the meeting room. In July Meeting purchased new chairs for the meeting room; in October we purchased bookcases for the library.

One problem with a small meeting is that there are a limited number of persons to do the work of the meeting. Some tasks are, at times, left undone. No children attend meeting, so we have no first day school.

The new building and meeting room have not led to increased attendance. In fact attendance at meeting for worship has decreased over the past few years. Concerns have been expressed that there were hurt feelings. Personal reasons were also at work. One long time member transferred membership after moving to a retirement community. Two long-time members died during the year; memorial services were opportunity to celebrate their lives.

San Diego has never been a meeting with abundant vocal ministry. Some Friends have been concerned about this. Some voice concerns about the quality of worship at the meeting; others find worship to be meaningful. Some friends have wondered whether or not more vocal ministry would encourage visitors to return.

Last year Meeting could not come to unity on a state of the society letter. In May, Meeting held a retreat with support from Ministry and Council of the quarter. The retreat was meaningful. One outcome of the retreat was Meeting achieved unity on a statement of belief:

- We want a meeting for worship that welcomes and appreciates the diversity of religious beliefs and is united in the Spirit of peace and love.
- We want to feel the influence of this Spirit in our lives.
- We want this same Spirit to be part of the community that we create, that enables us to interact with each other with love, respect and compassion, and that nurtures us in our daily lives.
- We want to use Faith and Practice and the wider Quaker community to guide us. The faith we have in the Spirit and the practice that follows from the Spirit are reflected in Faith and Practice and nurtured in the wider Quaker community.
- We want to share our faith and practice widely “answering that of God in every person.”

Ministry and Oversight Committee was charged with continuing to nurture worship in the meeting. Most months, meeting has held a pot luck dinner followed by some program; recently we have studied Thomas Kelly. We recently held a well-attended study session on *Faith and Practice*. More sessions are anticipated.

There is some hope that Meeting has found a core of persons who find vital worship at the meeting. And there is hope that this core can grow.

DISTANT MEETINGS NOT AFFILIATED WITH A QUARTERLY MEETING

Guatemala Friends Meeting

The Guatemala Friends Meeting, though small and scattered, fills a spiritual need for members and attenders and provides a special service to students served by our scholarship program which is in its 40th year. We currently have 100 mostly indigenous students who are studying for careers that they will use back in their communities. Members and attenders play various roles in the administration of this endeavor. This is a vibrant program which attracts numerous donors in the states. An additional part of the program is a week of studying

English in Antigua with volunteer teachers from the states and strengthens the program and relationships with donors. Part of the training of the students involves an annual conference for them which features Guatemalan educators with special interests in educating this segment of our population.

A weakness of our Meeting is our small size. We have four members (two of whom now reside in the states), two sojourners and four sometime attenders. Depending on how many people are out of the country at any given time, we meet on one or two Sundays of each month in each other's homes. Meeting is always followed by a shared lunch and an afternoon of fellowship which keeps us close. It is hard to attract newcomers because of our size, time limitations and the distances to travel between homes. Several of us are gone regularly at least once or twice a year for extended periods of time. It is not at all unusual during these times to have Meeting with only two or three in attendance. Those who attend Meeting are dedicated sincere worshippers who value our opportunities to worship together. Another aspect of our Meeting is the fair regularity of visitors. These are people traveling through, or Americans who may be here temporarily and interested in Quakers. They are important to the vibrancy of our Meeting, and we try to maintain contact with them when they leave.

Mexico City Friends

We started the year with 5 new chairs. Stable, solid, a sense of the familiar though renewed. These chairs represent the growth experienced by Mexico City Monthly Meeting in 2012.

We came together at the beginning of the year to organize the 38th General Gathering of Friends in Mexico (*RGAM*) under the theme of Revealing the Inner Light. It is through the collective planning for the event that we made our community even more solid. Friends joined us from different parts of Mexico and beyond for sharing and fellowship in an atmosphere of harmony and openness.

Mexico City Friends were present both nationally and internationally. With the *RGAM* gathering we renewed our ties with other Friends in Mexico, taking on a new, yet familiar role. With three of our members attending Kenya 2012, together with other Mexican Friends, Mexico was present and participant in the largest gathering of Friends in recent years. With two of our members serving on committees of Pacific Yearly Meeting, our Monthly Meeting solidified its participation at the yearly level. Our participation at the annual gatherings of Intermountain and Pacific Yearly Meetings is familiar, but presented new and exciting experiences for our representatives.

The monthly worship sharing offered opportunities to explore a variety of topics, considering themes related to the World Gathering, Meeting for Worship, and how the Spirit moves among us.

We were joined by a young Friend in Residence over the summer, infecting us with her smile, positivity, and her passion for Quakerism. Through discussion groups, reflections, worship sharing, morning worship, and a renewed spirit of fellowship, we felt more centered and more joyful.

Other events of note this year include the decision to receive a small Worship Group in Oaxaca into our care, the clearness process and subsequent consent to the marriage of Giovanni Cocom Tah and Lydia White (both former Casa de los Amigos volunteers) in the manner of Friends under our stewardship, and the formal submission of our request for the Meeting to be officially recognized as a religious organization (*Asociación Religiosa*). These acts in and of themselves demonstrate a new stability and maturity among us as a Monthly Meeting.

We also carry concerns. What are we offering seekers? What are we doing for ourselves in our own journeys and our community in its collective journey? And, what are we affirming or saying with our actions?

Reflecting on the year, the new chairs have been integrated into our community, representing stability, solidity, and a sense of renewal. Do we have room for more chairs? More elements?

Los Amigos en la Ciudad de México

Empezamos el año con 5 sillas nuevas. Firmes, sólidas, un sentir de lo conocido y a la vez renovadas. Estas sillas representan el crecimiento experimentada por la Junta Mensual de la Ciudad de México en el año 2012.

Nos unimos durante los primeros meses del año para organizar y realizar el XXXVIII encuentro de la Reunión General de los Amigos en México bajo el tema Revelando la Luz Interior. Es a través de la planeación en conjunto que solidifiquemos aun más nuestra comunidad. Amigos llegaron de diferentes partes del país y más allá para compartir y convivir en un ambiente de armonía y apertura.

Los Amigos en la Ciudad de México estuvieron presentes tanto nacional como internacionalmente. Con el encuentro de la Reunión General renovamos nuestros lazos con otros Amigos en México, al tomar un papel nuevo pero a la vez conocido. Con la asistencia de tres de nuestros miembros en Kenia 2012, junto con otros Amigos mexicanos, México estuvo presente y participe en el encuentro más grande de los Amigos en años recientes. Con dos de nuestros miembros realizando servicios en comités de la Junta Anual del Pacífico, nuestra Junta Mensual solidificó su participación a dicho nivel. Nuestra participación en los encuentros de las Juntas Anuales de Entremontaña y del Pacífico es conocida pero presentó experiencias nuevas y emocionantes para nuestros representantes.

Las contemplaciones mensuales ofrecieron oportunidades para explorar una variedad de temas, considerando temas relacionados con el Encuentro Mundial, la Reunión Dominical y la espiritualidad que vive entre nosotros.

Durante el verano, nos visitó una joven como Amiga en Residencia, infectándonos con su sonrisa, positivismo y su pasión por el cuaquerismo. A través de pláticas, contemplaciones, sesiones de adoración compartida, adoración matutina y un espíritu de convivio renovado sentimos más centrados y con más alegría.

Otros eventos este año que destacan incluyen la decisión de recibir un pequeño Grupo de Adoración en Oaxaca bajo nuestro cuidado, el proceso de clarificación y subsecuente consentimiento para el matrimonio de Giovanni Cocom Tah y Lydia White (ambos exvoluntarios de Casa de los Amigos) en la manera de los Amigos bajo nuestro cuidado y la presentación formal de nuestra solicitud para el reconocimiento oficial de la Junta Mensual como una Asociación Religiosa. Estos actos en si demuestran una nueva firmeza y madurez en nosotros como Junta Mensual.

También tenemos preocupaciones o inquietudes. ¿Qué estamos ofreciendo a nuestros buscadores? ¿Qué estamos haciendo para nosotros mismos en nuestras propias búsquedas y para nuestra comunidad en su búsqueda colectiva? Y ¿qué es lo que estamos reflejando o diciendo con nuestras acciones?

Reflejando sobre el año, las sillas nuevas se han integrado a nuestra comunidad representando firmeza, solidez y un sentir de renovación. ¿Podemos integrar más sillas, más elementos?

Santa Barbara Friends Meeting

Spiritual life of the meeting Meeting for Worship has been the springboard/source of what we do. Seeking the spirit and calmness in silence is the well from which we then carry forth and do our work in the world. Members and attenders of our meeting feel a strong a sense of community and support in their spiritual lives. Our meetings for worship have generally been silent, however our spiritual afterthoughts are often rich and generous. At the rise of meeting we continue our fellowship in an unhurried and casual way. Throughout the year we have invited several guest speakers to speak about Quaker history and issues to our meeting.

We continue to find ways to gather and know one another in addition to our regular Sunday Meetings for Worship. These include well-attended annual events: Christmas Sing, Easter Pot luck with Easter Egg hunt, Summer Retreat, Pot lucks every couple of months, also well attended.

Newsletter is valued and continues with regular editor and people are contributing more.

Midweek reading group, though small, is of great importance to those who attend. Open to everyone it functions as both a study and spiritual support group.

We have also added to our worship activities a Healing Circle and monthly singing before meeting.

Owning our own meetinghouse has given us a sense of being grounded with a physical home. We continue to offer the space for activities of related groups such as the Threshold Choir, New Fathers' Group, AVP, La Leche League. The meeting is in financially sound condition.

Our First Day School has greatly benefitted by the addition of a regular teacher, who creates a program that is welcoming to a regular group of between zero to seven children, who do a variety of spiritual, musical and creative activities. Adult members are enriching this program by their presence and contributions.

New and past members Our meeting's numbers are fairly stable with great variations in attendance from one week to the next. We have two new members and two Friends have moved away, however they are still members. We honor F/friends who contributed so much when they were here, recognizing they are still part of us.

Ojai Worship Group, which is under the care of Santa Barbara Meeting, is flourishing and we enjoy frequent contact.

Friends Witness During the past year one of our members had the opportunity to attend FWCC in Kenya entitled Salt and Light. This concept of Friends being the "salt" resonated with us since we realize our numbers are small but our influence is felt. Our members are like the salt in a number of other groups. They are involved with other groups in the community including, Veterans for Peace, Clergy and Laity United for Economic Justice, Eco-faith, Coalition against Gun Violence, Prisoner Visitation Services, Vandenberg Air Force Base witness for peace, providing monthly dinner at a homeless shelter. Meeting members are also providing leadership in Death Penalty Focus, Alternatives to Violence Project/California and Friends Committee on Legislation/CA.

Our Peace, Earthcare and Social Concerns Committee has new members in addition to longer term members who help one another in the activities mentioned above as well as the committee's projects countering military recruitment and gun control in the schools.

Ongoing / future concerns The FWCC conference theme of Salt and Light also reminded us of our responsibility to share this Light which is so valuable to Quakers. In a society so divided by age, class, education and financial status, how can we as a meeting open our doors to help bridge these differences?

During the pondering of the past year's activities, the question of how might we reach out to more people catalyzed thoughtful considerations for the next year.

Some would like more opportunities to get to know individuals... more as a family. How can we find ways to reach out to one another as neighbors?

Santa Monica Friends Meeting

According to *Faith and Practice*, in a State of the Meeting report a meeting should examine its spiritual strengths, weaknesses and efforts to foster spiritual growth.

EDUCATION. An essential part of spiritual growth is understanding, and our casual attenders and visitors often do not understand Quakerism. In part to address this need, we developed an innovative weekly program called the "Quaker minute" where, at the rise of meeting, a member or attender takes a minute to explain a Quaker phrase. It succeeds in helping visitors, attenders, and even members to better understand Quakerism.

SIZE. Weekly attendance at meeting for worship roughly averages 25 people. This is up from 12 in the 1980's, but has been going down from a high point about 10 years ago. Our meeting directory lists as members 15 people who have not attended for years, so we are contacting them to see if they wish to remain members. We also have no way to obtain the address of newcomers. Many of our children stop attending when they become teens. We need to attract and keep younger members and attenders. This year we started an outreach group, which studied the problem, brainstormed many ideas and began work on a new brochure. Its work also led to a new, more readable sign in front. Our greatest weakness thus far is outreach to the larger community; many who would find a loving, supportive community in our meeting do not know we exist. Unfortunately the group stopped meeting due to a lack of leadership.

SERVICE. We serve *each other* (ex. giving emergency grants to members and attenders in need and to those wish to travel for spiritual reasons). We also serve *the larger Quaker community* (ex. providing significant funding for a video of the 6th World Conference of Friends in Kenya). And we serve *the world*—through our jobs (ex. providing medical services to the poor), helping others (examples: providing partial funding for the Alternatives to Violence program, regularly making sandwiches for the homeless). Many committees have had unclear responsibilities and there was no regular way for new members to learn the committee's tasks. So this year, each committee developed a description of its work, which we will use to help integrate new committee members into the work of the committee.

BOUNDARIES. We listened and labored over how to address the actions of a long-time attender who had been disruptive to the community for many years and with whom the spiritual bonds had been broken. The months we took to do this were beneficial: more and more damage became evident, and we came to unity on the need for a minute of disunity with him, asking him to stop participating in the life of the meeting. This difficult action was necessary to maintain the sense of mutual support and community that characterizes our meeting.

INVOLVEMENT. Our 15-week *Exploring Quakerism* course is attended by 8 to 13 people each week. We have a First Day school for children, and though we do not have a teen program, some of our teens participate in Quaker activities put on by Pacific Yearly Meeting, Southern California Quarterly Meeting and Ben Lomond Quaker Center. We worked to increase participation on key committees and as a result committees meet more consistently, and report to business meeting regularly. Attendance and participation at business meeting have increased. Financially, we are solvent, have reserves and are taking steps to make sure that our expenses do not exceed our revenues. We inform members and attenders that they need to contribute regularly to meeting.

CONCLUSION. We have many strengths and we are addressing our weaknesses. We are graced with an energetic Clerk. Members and attenders increasingly understand how they each contribute to creating a gathered meeting, whether in vocal ministry or silent worship.