

**COLLEGE PARK QUARTERLY MEETING
2016 – 2017 State of the Meeting reports**

Apple Seed	X
Berkeley	X
Central Coast	X
Chico	X
Davis	X
Delta	X
Fresno	
Grass Valley	X
Humboldt	X
Live Oak	X
Mendocino	
Monterey Peninsula	X
Napa Sonoma	X
Palo Alto	X
Redding	X
Redwood Forest	X
Reno	X
Sacramento	X
San Francisco	X
San Jose	X
Santa Cruz	X
Strawberry Creek	X
Visalia	X

Worship Groups

Carson City
 CSP Soledad
 Friends House
 Lake County
 Livermore
 Oakland
 Southern Humboldt
 Ukiah
 Western Shore

Apple Seed Friends Meeting State of the Meeting, 2017

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 often been as low as a half dozen regular Friends and attenders. Our total official membership in the Religious Society of Friends is 14, having added one new member who transferred in. However, several of us live far away from Sebastopol, including a weighty Friend who last year moved to the next county, taking with him his institutional memory.

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 have been able to send our representatives to Quarterly and Yearly Meetings, which has insured that we stay connected to those larger bodies of Friends.

We are also able to join with Redwood Forest Friends Meeting and Friends House Worship Group in some lobbying, spiritual support, and wider Quaker concern events.

We hold funds in the Redwood Credit Union in Santa Rosa: a checking and a savings account (“shares” in the Credit Union). We continue to give annually to local charities, including a small donation to a low-income scholarship fund at the Sonoma State University.

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.

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.

In worship, Friends have shared a sense of deep appreciation for the friendships and mutual support felt among us, epitomized by a Friend's message: “My heart is at home in this Meeting.”

Berkeley Meeting

State of the Meeting Report – April, 2017

Berkeley Friends Meeting has been quite active as a community this year, enriched by our experience of the Holy Spirit, and nourished by Friends and others from outside our immediate Meeting family. This year we began two ongoing programs that we feel are of special promise: Spiritual Life Sharing Groups and the Young Adult Friends. Spiritual Life Sharing Groups, which we learned about from Strawberry Creek Meeting, bring together small groups of people to enrich their spiritual lives by meeting monthly to share with one another. The Young Adult Friends group gathers together young adult Friends from all over the Bay Area to worship, share, and develop community.

We also have been privileged this year to learn from talks by guests from the wider community; had workshops on the Spirit of Quaker Process (led by Santa Cruz Meeting's Diego Navarro and our own Eric Moon), and on Clerking (led by San Francisco Meeting's Stephen Matchett and Redwood Forest's Barbara Babin); a Meeting group that combines reading poetry aloud out of the silence with worship sharing; and most recently a gathering of Berkeley, Strawberry Creek and San Francisco Meeting Friends which engaged in Spirit-led sharing with Jonathan Vogel-Borne, a New England Yearly Meeting Friend with deep roots in Pacific Yearly Meeting. Jonathan is currently traveling in ministry.

All this is in addition to Meeting programs continued from prior years: mid-week meetings for worship on Wednesday mornings and Thursday evenings (the latter conducted jointly with Strawberry Creek Meeting), occasional worship-sharing programs, Friendly Dinners, video-recorded oral histories (now archived at the University of California's Bancroft Library), study groups on Quaker history, a weekly reading group, a Quaker film series, and singing on First Days between our 9 am and 11 am meetings for worship. On most First Days after meeting for worship, Meeting folk and newcomers enjoy each other's presence as we solve intriguing jigsaw puzzles.

A beautiful and completely new Meeting website is a very welcome addition to our communications. Come visit us at berkeleyfriendsmeeting.org!

We were saddened this year by the deaths of several long-time Friends and attenders. We were nourished by memorial meetings in which we joined in both mourning and celebrating lives remembered.

We continue to enjoy our recently renovated meetinghouse, which is increasingly a regional Quaker resource. The newly spruced-up gardens in front of the building lend welcome color to our Meeting home. We now have wheelchair-accessible bathrooms through the building, and we hope to have the last of the renovation project's major construction work completed by the end of 2017. We will miss this year the income from the registration service for Pacific Yearly Meeting, which we used for the building fund. Our improved and enlarged facility made it possible to host College Park Quarterly Meeting in January, the first time we have been able to do that in several years. We are grateful to our friends and neighbors of the Latter-Day Saints congregation across the street, which has generously shared its parking spaces and rooms for larger events for which our needs exceeded our own capacity.

Unfortunately, our general financial situation (beyond the funds that are still available for the last part of the renovation of the meeting house) is not very rosy, due principally to our still-unresolved status with respect to property taxes.

Our Meeting is richly blessed with people who visit and stay in contact with Friends in need. We continue to be challenged to stay in contact, especially with Friends who can't come to the meetinghouse.

The Livermore Worship Group, which is under the care of Berkeley Meeting, holds meetings for worship each Sunday evening, and monthly meetings for business. We have not managed to stay in contact as frequently this year as was previously the case; we hope to attend to this relationship more regularly in the coming year.

Like many others within and beyond the Quaker community, we have felt deeply challenged and disturbed by recent currents and developments in the civic life of our community and nation. We opened the meetinghouse to Friends and others for meditation and worship shortly after the presidential election; this seemed helpful. We have hosted training for an FCNL Advocacy Team, as part of a national FCNL program for effective and coordinated grassroots lobbying for Quaker concerns locally and nationally; a number of Meeting people are active participants in this new program. Although many of us are individually active in seeking to repair and heal a broken social order, we are still struggling to come to terms with what these developments mean for our Meeting, and to discover how the Spirit means to be active through us, as it has been active throughout Quaker history.

**CENTRAL COAST
STATE OF THE MEETING
April 2017**

A Friend was once asked, "What is a Quaker?" The Friend replied, "One who attends Meeting for Worship."

For our Meeting this rings true. This is why we come together, the silent worship. Meeting for Worship is the heart of the Meeting. Meeting for Worship for Business is the vascular system pumping the blood through and helping us to grow. We find spiritual sharing groups and committee work help us thrive. Community, grounding, safety, support, friendships and desire to help our larger community also bring us back every week.

This last year we have seen growth and challenges in our Meeting.

We have committees that work hard to do the work of the Meeting. As in many Meetings one of our challenges is to find enough people to do that work. Many of us find the committee work rewarding even when it is time consuming. We have found the work helps us bond to one another and to support each other through challenges in the Meeting and in our own lives. We have seen more people start to attend Meeting for Business. With this is an increased interest in committee work.

We have also supported two Spiritual sharing groups. These groups have added a new dimension to our vocal ministry in Meeting for Worship, and have strengthened the bonds among Friends. The groups meet regularly and participants have found this has improved personal spiritual growth.

This last year we purchased, for the Meeting, an annual pass to Ben Lomond Quaker Center. We have had someone from the Meeting attend almost every workshop since. This too has supported the spiritual health of the Meeting.

We as a Meeting along with many other people in this country are intimately feeling the effects of drug addiction. We have one grown child of the Meeting struggling with addiction and we lost one grown child of the Meeting to an overdose this past year. Others in the Meeting struggle with active addiction in their families, too. Our Meeting is not unique in struggling with this epidemic but we have found being open, loving and supportive of our feelings and our spirits has been helpful. This last year two members of our community have lost adult children to cancer. We have found that grieving together as well as supporting each other has brought us closer.

In April 2017 one of our founding members, Chuck Atlee, died. Chuck and his wife Sue (she died in 2014) started this Meeting in the 1960s. We feel that they were the tap root of our Meeting. We will continue to grow but we feel the loss of these two wonderful Friends.

As a Meeting we try to be aware of the needs of the individual; such as, learning to accommodate hearing challenges or mobility issues. Sometimes it's just helping with children. We make an effort to look out for each other.

Another challenge that we see is our lack of diversity. We are a mostly older white Meeting. We have a few young adults who attend occasionally. We have 2 children who attend regularly and 3 more occasionally. We would like to see more diversity in our Meeting and are looking at ways to achieve this.

We continue to work in the greater community: supporting Alternatives to Violence Project in the prison and feeding the homeless. We have also started the work to revamp our website to help with out -reach. Our retreat this past year was on stewardship of the environment and our spiritual connections. Many of the Meeting attended and found it informative and refreshing.

With all the challenges this last year we continue to grow together. We recognize our challenges and celebrate our strengths. We hope to continue to grow spiritually and in diversity.

Chico Friends Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends

State of the Meeting Report, 2017

"Tender, generous, and often very human, we are a small but steadfast people wrestling with what it means to be Quaker." (CFM State of the Meeting Report, 2016) We feel we have continued in this condition again this year.

It is a blessing how our Meeting maintains unity and spirituality with the efforts and gifts of such a diverse community of persons. It's as if God is truly providing guidance through each of us to create and maintain our Chico Friends Meeting. We seem to touch many lives in a spiritually nourishing way.

We continue to strive to resolve conflicts, using special sessions to deeply listen to each other. This clarifies our thoughts to better understand each other, resulting in very powerful gatherings. There are also deeper level conflicts that our meeting is finally addressing in a way of growing the love amongst us. Many individuals in Meeting are reaching out with love and support to comfort those who are experiencing loss and suffering of loved ones. Though Ministry and Oversight committee gives pastoral care, it is reassuring that individuals in Meeting do so as well.

Meetings for Worship and for Business are generally well attended and are spiritually refreshing. We are able to clerk ourselves most of the time, and there is time given for silence when we struggle with unity.

Participating fully in Meeting can make life busier, rather than more simple. But as one Friend reports, when the effort is made to show up, we are energized, inspired and centered.

Some Friends feel the traditions and practices of Quakerism hold them most accountable to the Meeting while others feel it is relationships with each other and activities within the community that holds them most accountable. And for some it is both. All of us are doing our best to live according to the Light that we are given.

We have many, regular reoccurring group opportunities for people to get to know each other. Every Sunday there are Quaker Thought and Life study and discussion sessions as well as singing before worship. Every Wednesday we meet for Midweek worship and Quaker Exploration. Besides our monthly standing committee work, regular potlucks, and a book club group, all are invited to Simple Suppers in various homes. When Friends attend out of town Quaker events or make trips to follow a leading, they are invited to share a "Travelling Friend Report" about their experience. These reports have been very much appreciated. We have hosted for many years a well-attended Community Singing Circle. Even the newsletter is a group effort! Our two retreats have been very rich, providing time to be able to meet in small groups and get to know each other better, and feel how love and unity flows through us.

Even though we have few children that regularly attend, the Quaker Youth Group prepare as if there are going to be many more kids. Their safety policy was created to protect the children. When a problematic person tried to interact with the children, everyone came together and we were able to respond in a way that felt faithful.

Care of our buildings and grounds has also helped us to maintain love and unity and strengthen our sense of community. Our property is something tangible that we have a responsibility to care for; we work together on monthly workdays, and individually at other times. For some, such work is a significant part of their life in our meeting.

We appreciate the Witness and Service committee and the speakers that we have had about the Israel/Palestine issue. Some who have heard these speakers expressed having been changed by them and are grateful for it. Our homeless response includes monthly dinners prepared for the Torres Community Shelter, along with many individual Friends who have been involved in the community winter Safe Space shelter. We've also focused on gender and sexual minority outreach. We had a booth at the annual Pride event, created an LGBTQ+ Welcome Brochure, and are educating ourselves how to be better allies.

Meeting has helped people discern their leadings and has given support to them. Informal financial and spiritual support quickly arose when a friend felt called to witness at Standing Rock, helping her to get there and back. Hearing her testimony upon her return was powerful. Two other friends have inspired many in Meeting to become engaged in providing financial support and accountability for the Afghan Girls' School. One member and her daughter were led to spend almost half a year helping at Ramallah Friends School and a refugee camp in Greece, and shared this with us on their return.

Our Long Range Planning committee is searching for ways to be more welcoming and ways to deepen our understanding of who we are as a Meeting. We have posted a "Love Thy Neighbor" banner on the outside wall of our Fellowship Hall. We continue to make efforts to reach out to people who want to practice Quaker worship and participate in our community.

Davis Friends Meeting 2017 State of the Meeting Report

Spirit/Divine Presence has been moving among us in many ways during the past year; we have experienced joy, sadness, and challenge.

There have been some new people to attend Meeting for Worship. Individuals who are completely new to Quaker practice have sought us out, as well as individuals who already have some history with Friends, either with our Meeting or with Friends elsewhere. These newcomers bring energy and perspective to our community and have helped us feel renewed opportunities for growth and deepening. Several of these new people have been staying with us for worship but have not yet been fully incorporated into the life of the Meeting. This year, we experienced the loss of two beloved elder members of our Meeting, Ted Neff and Bill Brow.

We continue our practice of silent worship which often brings a sense of peace. Worshipping with others to find our way in this turbulent time has fueled hope and resolve to continue to strive toward unity and justice. The quality of our Meeting worship has seemed balanced between centered silence and vocal ministry. We continued to seek to deepen our connections with one another by assessing the needs of the Meeting and individuals and developing second hour programs that are educational, topical, and spiritually nourishing, and have been well-received. We have continued to work in coalition with interfaith groups on climate justice and immigration and sanctuary, and homelessness.

Combining our former Peace & Social Concerns and EarthCare committees into a joint "Peace, Earthcare, and Social Concerns" committee has not only simplified the task of finding committee members willing to serve, but has also coincided with -- and perhaps contributed to -- an invigorating shift of focus to supporting leadings within our meeting. We are faced with an uncertain future in the governing of our country and as such we are waking up to potentially challenging situations. At times we feel overwhelmed to adequately address the pressing issues arising with not enough people to take on all the concerns we would like to address. We struggle with how to keep these critical issues, such as immigration, refugees, and sanctuary energized, focused, and effective. We have been working to discern our present priorities, most important of which is coming together to be prepared to support individuals in their leadings. Recent leadings have included a person who would like to financially support DACA college students, a Friend whose concern about the Dakota Access Pipeline which threatens the water of the Standing Rock Sioux led him to visit Standing Rock, and several friends who have been examining white privilege; in addition about 14 women from Meeting went to the Women's March in Sacramento, and two members went to the March in Washington DC. Our ongoing concern about the health of the planet has led many in our meeting to be intentional about how we travel and what we eat, and many have participated in local Davis environmental initiatives. Several members met once a month to hold the refugees in the Light; we also put together kitchen and bathroom kits to help refugees resettle in Sacramento.

This past year we focused on specific projects to convey to our town and neighborhood what we are as a Meeting and simply that "we exist". We co-sponsored a potluck with the local neighborhood association; we have a free 4th Friday movie night and discussion that relates to environmental and justice issues. A member has challenged us to think about whom we want to reach and the content of the message before selecting additional methods of communicating the message, e.g. a Meeting bookmark, a building banner. We continued the weekly peace vigil in Davis and the monthly vigil in Woodland.

With the help of dedicated members we continued to be good stewards of our building and garden, accomplishing some needed exterior repairs. Our garden was maintained by repairing the irrigation system, digging dry wells, trimming the more vigorous plants, and replacing plants that didn't survive the summer. Our Meetinghouse is well used by other groups during the week, some of which also include Meeting people. These groups include dances of universal peace,

drumming, sacred harp singing, meditation groups, a twelve-step group, the Interfaith Rotating Winter Shelter, and our Meeting's monthly movie. In our hospitality and social time after Meeting we have provided healthy snacks to reflect our values for earth care and the health of our children and participants.

Care of our children has focused on how to support and include the two teens who attend regularly; they are of an age to challenge us to sustain their interest. Several adults have shared their life story with the teens in a Worship Sharing format, and we would like to do more of this. We continue to strive to include more adults in the care and spiritual education of the children and teens.

We have been guided to think more long-term regarding Meeting resources and how they link to our values and goals. We are working to steward resources of the Meeting and to be explicit regarding what we have and what we spend our resources on. For some, money talk feels taboo, and for others it is an essential conversation. We are not yet at unity but are on a spiritual journey together. How do we achieve our goals and in that process bring thought to action?

Interest in using the Meeting pass for Ben Lomond Quaker Center is growing and has been used by several people within Meeting.

We continue to have a challenge filling our committee and officer positions and clerkships, and we have been looking for ways to simplify our structure to better meet the needs of Meeting. Several committees have had trouble making time to meet and carry out their basic functions, while others seem to be thriving. Discernment helps create focus on essential tasks and to ask the right questions. What does it mean to right-size the work of our Meeting? We have been seeking clarification in the purpose and function of our committee structure, and we are considering combining some committees and job descriptions. We experimented with new ways to invite people to serve the life of our Meeting. Framing committee work not only as a service to the meeting but also as an opportunity to grow a sense of community and purpose within the Meeting seems to be well received, and helps us to collectively prepare to be a thriving community of Friends with the experience and grounded spiritual energy necessary to be able to respond to needs of the greater community and world.

The Meeting's spirit of love, joy, and forgiveness gives strength to individual actions that require courage, persistence, and patience. We strive to honor simplicity in our work toward truth. We are challenged to let go of patterns of behavior and items that no longer serve us. At the same time, way opens, as when valued reminders of the past can be re-stored in our Archives and room made for new items in our library, in our hearts, and in our ways of thinking.

As we look at what holds us together, we note that we are held together by people who continue to show up for all aspects of our Meeting, by the caring and love we have for each other and for the Meeting, and by searching together for spiritual guidance, values, and truth that inform our presence and work in the world.

In the Light,

Nan Rowan, Clerk
Davis Friends Meeting
An Open, Welcoming, and Affirming Meeting

DELTA MONTHLY MEETING OF FRIENDS / STATE OF THE MEETING, 2016

At a recent Monthly Meeting, Delta Friends focused on the current state of our Meeting. In truth, Friends have been exploring our state all during this past year.

Our numbers remain small but fairly stable. As always, we are geographically dispersed, and we deeply appreciate our worship groups and sites to help us remain close. We have lost no members, though we lost one dear, long time attender, Lucy Golsan, who passed away in May of 2016. She lived a long life and was close to her loving family. Friends give thanks for her life and the many gifts she shared with us through worship and life example.

Monthly Meeting continues to be based in Stockton, at the Pacific Complementary Center for the moment, but, sadly, we need to find a new home. Our dear hosts, who are a part of Delta Meeting, are retiring and selling their practice and the Center. We are currently on a site search for a new home in the Stockton area. No decisions have been finalized, so we rely on the warm welcome in Friends homes and our worship sites. Friends await the coming changes of the new year.

Delta Friends remain close and spend as much time as possible with one another. Friends take joy in our fellowship and manage many good laughs and tears while supporting one another through the aging process. Together, we search for ways to deal with medical issues, keeping and losing personal freedoms, while learning to allow others to help when needed. Meeting surely misses the joy of young families and attenders, and we love to share news of our extended families. Many have grown up under the love and care of our Meeting.

Meeting finds that we are less able to be active in both Quarterly and Yearly affairs, and this past year Delta Friends agreed to lay down our annual December witness / worship at Lawrence Livermore National Laboratories, which we have hosted for so many years. We know that younger souls are leading this concern now and will continue in the future. Our witness has been a pivotal part of our strength and resolution as Friends and as a Meeting.

As we become physically less involved in Friends and community concerns, Meeting finds way to deepen our financial commitment to more causes. So, we dig deep to match our desire to support those who carry on the efforts to peace and justice. Of special joy to us is our thirty year support for the Modesto Peace Life Center's annual Peace Essay Contest, open to all students in Stanislaus County schools. These young students share deep insights and love for the world. It is both familiar and new every year!

As we reflect on the circle of our lives and of our Meeting, Friends find deep and nourishing worship together. We wonder if it is time to consider laying down Monthly Meeting and spend more time in worship and in fellowship. We listen and pray for way to open. We ask that Friends hold us in the Light, as we move toward this next collective adventure that has always been the heart of Delta Friends. As always, we send love and greetings to Friends everywhere. You are ever welcome to visit, and we do host a great retreat at Calaveras Big Trees every summer.

In Peace,
Judith Bunting, Clerk 
Delta Monthly Meeting of Friends
April 09, 2017

Grass Valley Friends Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends - Fourth Month, 2017

As clerk of our Meeting, having recently participated in our worship sharing on the State of our Meeting, what strikes me about us this year is the sense of community felt and experienced by our members. A significant part of our close community also is a large and often fluid group of attenders, some for years, others for a short period of time.

We expanded our participation in community by joining FGC this past year, as we have for years with Quarterly, PYM and yearly pass for Quaker Center. We also bring our ministry out into our community in a wide variety of ways, like home meeting for worship, our annual retreat where members connect and deeply share, converging at a family's home to help with chores in their time of need. (I'm speaking of little kids helping to stack fire wood and bringing brush to be burned, of elderly to young adults weeding the garden, carpentry repairs to a raised garden bed, nimble adults up on ladders cleaning out gutters ... just to highlight some of the activities. And being aware of the joy and conversations going on while working side by side. And being aware as we stopped at noon to have lunch together how much that reminded me of the gospel act of "breaking bread together in his name.") Monthly potlucks is also a new activity. We continue our monthly participation in helping prepare a meal at the homeless shelter Hospitality House. And we support and keep in close touch with Placer County Worship Group, begun by a very active and vibrant family from our Meeting. Community, togetherness, sharing, caring, that human touch that communicates love and joy and acceptance.

Like Sierra Friends Center, on whose campus we meet, we too are aware of our changing situation. We no longer have a huge Peace and Social Justice Committee. We were once known in our community through our social actions. "We are not only a peace church, though." and "Can we be known as more than a political entity?" were some of the comments/questions voiced at our State of the Meeting discussion. An active committee in meeting is our Spiritual Life, offering monthly programs and special guest presenters and hosting this past year our three book groups and the annual retreat. "Is it time to express our self from a spiritual grounding...?"

We're experiencing change in our age, and all that brings with it. Diminished capacity, not able to do what we used to take for granted, serious transitions in our life like needing someone to live in and help us, family members rallying around and supporting us, giving up our car keys. On and on could go the list. While at the same time, each week at the beginning of Meeting for Worship, we welcome the little ones who come with their parents, as different members and attenders of meeting provide a special program. The children are encouraged to sit the first ten minutes with their family, then are invited to exit and go to another location for an activity appropriate for their age group. At the close of meeting, they return to share.

In reflection of what we share with you above, it's a quick snapshot of LIFE, Life as it is unfolding in our midst. Life together (38 members and many attenders) as we are sharing it and experiencing it and honoring it as we gather in silence. For it is when we take this "time out" and sit and be quiet and be open, we slow everything down to a walk or bend over to look closer at that flower or shrub or creature that caught our attention. A point of stillness where the wonder of This Life can touch us to our depths and we see and hear anew.

For as a community, we acknowledge we are each unique, "refracting God in different ways", we value who we are as Quakers, seeking that unity which wants to come to Light in our midst, open to being led, honoring the process we use to conduct our business meeting, willing to have the patience and taking the time it takes for the embers that need to kindle and catch in our midst. Centering on this, together, within our blessed community.

Dean Olson, Clerk of the Meeting

Humboldt Friends Meeting State of the Meeting February 2017

Sometimes doubt and a sense of spiritual emptiness can lead to isolation but the renewal experienced in the Seekers Discussion Group, in fellowship, and in Friends' commitment to improving our world bring us back to the Meeting for Worship. Seasoned clerks, the reliable structure of committees, fellowship with kindred spirits and deepening spirituality are reasons cited why Friends keep returning. We recognize that there is consolation and desolation along our paths in life. In both cases, Friends are supported by worship, fellowship and work in the Meeting.

The Seekers Discussion Group before Meeting for Worship on First Day continues to be a source of connection and enlightenment for Friends as well as an enhancement to the Silent Worship that follows. When Silent Worship commences with a core group of Friends who have connected spiritually and collectively just prior to Meeting, a gathered sense is felt by many.

Topics at Seekers in 2016 included Names of God, Gratitude, Paradoxes, the Beatitudes, Forgiveness, the Transition Streets approach to right use of resources, and, finally, Love Thy Enemy, which was examined through "Theater for Dialogue," a performance approach to stimulating thought and discussion. In addition, two books were studied: Catherine Whitmire's Plain Living: A Quaker Approach to Simplicity, and Steve Smith's Eastern Light, Awakening to Presence in Zen, Quakerism and Christianity.

The Peace & Social Concerns Committee organized tabling at the North Country Fair on the Arcata Plaza for outreach and to raise awareness about the ballot proposition to abolish the death penalty. In addition, they provided outreach to the community by tabling at the Arts Alive evenings in Eureka Old Town. Peace & Social Concerns also provided issues for letter writing at rise of meeting monthly to encourage elected officials and others in support of issues at the heart of Quaker Testimonies. These efforts and events increased connection among us as we were sustained by Humboldt Friends Meeting.

Reaching out into the community brought new attenders and returning Friends to the Meeting for Worship, including a diversity of young and not-so-young adults. Our meeting is growing in both size and spirit. The latter in particular is aided by the periodic presence of children. Although small meetings have a special feeling, a spiritual critical mass is reached when all the chairs set out are filled. Friends express pleasure and gratitude when this happens.

The difficult election of 2016 brought dismay and grief but also a renewed sense of care for each other and a commitment to reaching out to others in the wider community with understanding and tolerance. The political situation may have contributed to the addition of new attenders as well.

In August, Friends both near and far went on retreat to a remote camp with cabins, kitchen and meeting areas as well as hiking and swimming options. The focus of vocal and silent worship for the weekend was "Practicing the Presence," adapted from materials from a five-day Quaker Center retreat held in the spring of 2016. Everyone pitched in to make the food preparation and healthful meals an enjoyable time together.

Deepening the spiritual and social life of the meeting through shared work, play, and worship carry us onward. We greet the new year with resolve and a sense of optimism for the continued growth and spiritual grounding of our Monthly Meeting.

**LIVE OAK FRIENDS MEETING (LOFM)
APRIL 2017 STATE OF THE MEETING REPORT**

2017 marks Live Oak's 8th year as a Monthly Meeting. During these years, we have grown in the Spirit, deepening our worship together. We have tried to be faithful listeners, waiting to hear God's voice speaking through us.

Newcomers continue to find out about us, either by word of mouth, or through our Live Oak Meeting website on the Quaker Cloud. We regularly see more than 20 people who attend Meeting for Worship (twice monthly), and the religious education hour that precedes it.

In August 2016, Oasis Charter School in Salinas notified us that, because of scheduling needs for the new school year, we could no longer have our Meetings for Worship there. Since then we have been without a consistent Meeting space. We searched the Salinas, Marina, and Watsonville areas for churches, community centers, and libraries from which we might rent space. Some criteria we used included: location, appearance and condition of meeting buildings and grounds, cost of rental, access to public transit, accessibility for mobility impaired, and nearby parks/playgrounds for our children. We had to let some desirable sites go because the costs of rental and liability insurance exceeded the limitations of our modest annual budget. At present, we are working out final arrangements to meet regularly at Temple Beth El in Salinas. This is one of the religious communities that have allowed us to use their space for a trial period. Otherwise, we have been meeting in members' homes, as we did when we were still a worship group and then a preparatory meeting. We've done our best to practice patience during this corporate journey, and await a way to open to us eventually.

We've also noticed increased numbers at our Business Meetings, held on the first Sunday of each month. Additionally, many in our small group continue to provide service and leadership through community organizations and committee work.

The Worship Group at Soledad State Prison remains under our care. Currently there are 7 to 8 Live Oak Friends who've worshipped and participated in worship sharing discussions, with 7 to 10 inmates, twice monthly. Two Monterey Peninsula Friends Meeting members, in their 80's and 90's; a Palo Alto Friend, and Bob and Kathy Runyan of Ben Lomond Quaker Center have also joined the group for worship occasionally. All involved have expressed their appreciation for the depth of connection with the Spirit and each other, and for the quality of the silence. We have also participated in several daytime retreats, which have included worship, Bible study, lessons on Quaker history, and singing.

One member did extensive work arranging to have in place a Friends support network in Belize City for a long-time attender of the group who, upon his release from prison in February, was awaiting deportation to his home country.

We've again purchased an annual Meeting Pass to Ben Lomond Quaker Center.

The pass allows one person from Live Oak Meeting to attend one of Quaker Center's weekend programs each month. We hope that, in this way, more Live Oak Friends will have the opportunity to experience the richness and beauty of Quaker Center. Two Live Oak members led a weekend workshop on Couples Enrichment at Quaker Center in

January 2017, and another Live Oak couple will facilitate a Silent Retreat there in April. Three Live Oak members are now serving on the Ben Lomond Quaker Center Board: one as Co-Clerk, one as Recording Clerk, and one as Treasurer.

We remain aware of the need for in-reach as well as outreach. Our in-reach mostly takes the form of Meeting for Worship, monthly men's and women's groups, and a revitalized coordinated adult and children's religious education program. Our Religious Education Committee has encouraged many of us to present lessons and facilitate discussions. The sharing that occurs during First Day School enriches and deepens our communal experience of worship. During the past year we based our presentations on the Quaker Testimonies. They used examples from the early Friends of the 1600's, and also drew from the lives of contemporary Friends. Our Christmas lesson focused on the flight of the Holy Family as refugees from Bethlehem to Egypt, reading and discussing the book *Refuge* by Anne Booth. Friends found the story quite relevant to the current worldwide situation of millions forced to leave their homelands to escape persecution.

We continue to express our social concerns through ongoing activities such as providing a meal and music to homeless women once a month, and supporting those who are taking Alternatives to Violence into the community and local prisons. Some Live Oak members recently offered a basic AVP Training to members of Salinas' homeless community in the area around Soledad Street.

Our Meeting makes regular donations to local and international service organizations. With the generous donation of one member, we are providing a two-year scholarship for a student attending CSUMB (California State University Monterey Bay) focusing on the areas of peace studies and social justice. We are always mindful of having our outreach grow out of our inner life. We are grateful for the blessings our Meeting brings to our lives.

Live Oak Friends Meeting State of the Meeting Hip Hop Epistle 2017

From the mid 1980's on down to today We've gathered together 'round the Monterey Bay
As a worship group first: South County by name By 20-04 a Preparative Meeting became
In 20-09 t'was our time to grow up For the past 8 years we've continued to show up *(hey)*

We are the Live Oak Friends Meeting, Live Oak Friends Meeting

At least 20 of us send you our greetings.

We're small yet we're also growin' alive — And we want to ensure our Meeting will thrive.

Last August, post Worship, is when we all heard That the School's Director'd given us word
That after seven years meeting there we'd have to go It came as a surprise to us-- how could we know?

So we began searching for a new place to meet All over the County, we took to the street
And phoned some libraries and community centers 'Swell as churches and temples that might accept renters
And meanwhile we offered our homes as a way We could worship every first and third Sunday

While we looked for a site that could feel so appealing Yet not so expensive that our budget'd go reeling.
As of March this year our flock was still searchin' We hoped Way would open for a temple or church 'n
T'would be reachable using public transportation Also close to a park — a place of recreation
As of April it's still too early to tell, but we might have an agreement with Temple Beth El!
We have families with kids now that we want to nurture. We want our Meeting to grow into the future *(you see)*

We are the Live Oak Friends Meeting, Live Oak Friends Meeting

Twenty to thirty of us send you our greetings.

We're small yet we're also growin' alive — And we want to ensure our Meeting will thrive.

The Soledad Worship Group's still under our care A dozen inmates usually join with us there
Our All ages religious ed. program's been documented This year the Friends Testimonies presented
Lives of AVP workshop attenders we're enrichin'-- and we take dinner and music to Dorothy's Kitchen
Our website on Quaker Cloud Network's well done -- We're **Live Oak** in **SALINAS**, not them in **HOUSTON** *('cause)*

We are the Live Oak Friends Meeting, Live Oak Friends Meeting

More than thirty of us send you our greetings.

We're small yet we're also growin' alive — And we want to ensure our Meeting will thrive.

Like the Elders at Balby in Friends' early days -- We look after our spiritual community in ways
Such as vistin' the sick n' those going thru hard times — we know what that's like -- we've all been there sometimes
We become peaceful while we humbly serve -- we stop hate n' racism — 'cause all deserve *(Dignity!)*

We are the Live Oak Friends Meeting, Live Oak Friends Meeting

More and more of us send you our greetings.

We're small yet we're also growin' alive — And we want to ensure our Meeting will thrive.

ukulele

ukulele

ukulele

ukulele

ukulele

ukulele

ukulele

Monterey Peninsula Friends Meeting State of the Meeting Report 2017

Monterey Peninsula Friends Meeting (MPFM) is a small community of members, attenders, and visitors. We have seen an increase in attenders over the past year, with participants ranging in age from under a year old to the those in their nineties. Some have become regular or semi-regular attenders, enriching the Meeting with their participation in Business Meeting, at potlucks, and other Meeting-related activities. We have frequent visitors to Carmel's Carl Cherry Center, where we continue to hold our meetings for worship and monthly business meeting. Some newcomers are curious about Friends faith and/or are seeking a meditative environment to satisfy their spiritual needs. Others are Friends visiting from meetings in the USA and abroad.

We have sought to support members and attenders experiencing challenges--life changes, illness, personal loss, and other difficulties. The Meeting's Ministry and Counsel Committee (M & C) meets monthly and addresses various needs of the members, attenders, and Meeting at large. M & C adapted a Live Oak Friends Meeting Final Arrangements' form which has been made available to the Meeting. Our newsletter, both in print and email, reaches those unable to attend Meeting.

We strive to make MPFM better known to others through the listings in the *Friends Journal* Directory and on the quaker.org and quakerfinder.org web pages. Our "montereyfriends.org" website is currently undergoing changes to the content material. Monthly potlucks, held in members' and attenders' homes, enable us to get to know each other better, share insights and reflections, and enjoy informal, relaxed fellowship. We join with the Live Oak Friends Meeting in December for the annual holiday potluck and singalong.

As individuals, we are active in a variety of community programs, organizations, and personal endeavors. We have joined with other allied nonprofit groups to cosponsor events that are local, national and international in scope, including the Hiroshima-Nagasaki Remembrance Day gathering held each August at Lovers' Point, Pacific Grove. The meeting also sends a representative to the meetings of Peace Coalition of Monterey County. By moving our savings to the Friends' Fiduciary Fund several years ago, we've been able to increase our outreach donations, making good use of the Fund's interest revenues. We are aware that, as Friends, our beliefs are not theoretical or static, but ones that translate into action--beliefs to inspire and guide us in our personal lives.

We greet this coming year, 2017, with hope and a sense of resilience, knowing that there will be times when our Quaker faith may be tested, our inner reserves called upon, and our reliance on/need for support from our Friends' community is given new meaning.

Napa Friends Meeting, State of the Meeting Report 2016

The Napa Meeting began as a Worship Group under Redwood Forest Meeting in the early 1980s and has been a Monthly Meeting since November 1991. We are located in Napa but draw Members and Attenders from several surrounding cities. This year we will change our name from Napa Sonoma Meeting to Napa Meeting. We are enriched by the variety of people who have found their way to us and then continue to come. As a small Meeting with only 4 official Members, we have worried at times that we might not survive. However the quality of our worship and fellowship points to good health! Including our Napa Members, we have about 15 loyal Attenders, some continuing to hold membership from more distant Meetings. We now even have two children, a source of joy and renewal.

Our Meeting, partly because of size, tries to be judicious about our involvement in our local community and the wider world community. We donate to and are very grateful to our site host, "Voices", which provides many services in keeping with Quaker values. Napa Meeting activities include attendance and participation in community efforts for social justice and earth stewardship. (Examples are the Martin Luther King observance and the Healing Walk for Napa Valley.) We continue to help in sponsoring regular peace vigils in Napa. We seek to be a part of the wider Quaker fellowship, including Quarterly and Yearly. We hope that participation can grow in the future. We were grateful to be able to again send two of our seasoned Friends to the Quaker Consultation this year. Thanks to the two Consultation weekends, we are now moving forward with fresh ideas and inspiration. One exciting development is our ongoing construction of a new website, thanks to the Quaker Cloud.

In addition to our monthly Meeting for Business, we also schedule a variety of monthly after-Meeting sessions which we call Third Sunday. We all look forward to quarterly Gatherings, each shepherded by a different person. This includes good food and fellowship, singing, and creative group projects. We have appreciated a number of visitations from local and more far-flung Meetings. When some of us travel in this country and abroad we try to visit other Meetings. Visits as well as phone and email contacts are helping us feel supported as part of a larger network.

This year we are continuing a process of "leadership" change. Our hope is that all who come regularly to our Meeting find a role in the life and work of the Meeting. At times this means subdividing a clerkship or task. The result, we feel, has been a more participatory Meeting which celebrates the strengths of each person.

At a time when many of us are not proud of our federal government's new direction, we are always proud of Quaker values and the Quaker imperative toward civic action.

Respectfully submitted,

Katharine Mawer, Paulette Litz Co Clerks of the Napa Monthly Meeting

PALO ALTO FRIENDS MEETING

State of the Meeting report 2016-2017

About this time last year, Palo Alto Meeting was deeply engaged in deciding whether we were led to radically change our committee structure. It had become clear that the existing system was unsustainable: we did not have enough people to fill the necessary committee positions. The effort of coming to unity on this structural change encouraged us to think deeply about what Meeting means to us and what we want it to be. During our discernment, we engaged each other respectfully and tenderly and found we came to know each other better. We began by asking ourselves some difficult questions – queries that continue to be re-asked in one form or another:

- What are the essential things that make Palo Alto Meeting important for my spiritual life?
- What qualities make for a vital, caring, spiritual place to worship and a community that I connect with?
- What makes the Quaker practice of Palo Alto Meeting evident to newcomers and the wider community?

We eventually made the decision to change, and both the process and the result have enriched our Meeting. We now have only 7 committees: Ministry and Counsel, Meeting Life, Religious Education, Property & Finance, Work in the World, Communications & Records and Nominating. Under their care we have Working Groups, each with a particular focus on a short or long-term task. We also created a temporary Transitions Committee to have a greater overview of how the new structure is developing and working. To be clear, the workload is not smaller and it may be that some things have fallen through the proverbial cracks, but the necessary work can be done by fewer people and we are each learning to step forward instead of asking a committee to do something for us. We are learning again that Quakerism is not a spectator sport.

What qualities make for vital, caring, and spiritual worship?" Some wish for more silent meetings, others hope for fewer secular and more deep faith-based messages, and others experience worship as deeply spiritual. Partisan opinions are rarely expressed directly in worship; our ministry often addresses our deep concerns for the welfare of the world in terms of our Quaker values.

Our recent spring gathering at Ben Lomond Quaker Center provided a chance to try our new structure. Our annual topic-based retreats have been steadily declining in attendance and in 2016 we felt we had to lay it down. But one member felt a strong calling to keep it going. She researched successful different retreat models, gathered a working group and continually encouraged us to attend, through announcements, reports, and individual invitations. We gathered to simply enjoy each other's company, and left refreshed. Our new structure helped facilitate her leading and provided all of us with a gift of greater fellowship. It is a model we can use again.

The work we did together to achieve our structural changes led us to want extended time together to consider topics of concern more deeply. A threshing session regarding the future of our 50-year-old Harvest Festival, which raises funds for the Friends Committee on Legislation of California, brought out both concerns about its sustainability and ideas that might make it more vital in coming years. A one-day retreat gave Friends a chance to share their experiences, concerns, and hopes about our new committee structure. We recently held an afternoon conversation about how we as individual Friends and as a corporate body are experiencing the

changes in our nation. All have brought us closer together, despite the distances between our homes and the distracting pace of our lives.

In 2016 we were blessed with 5 new members. We feel great joy that they have chosen to commit themselves to PAFM and to our community. At a recent potluck to welcome them, the organizing Friends worked with our First Day School to develop a “get-to-know” activity which was enjoyed by all.

Our First Day School continues to be a strong program that is faced with the familiar challenge of competing activities that affect regular attendance by its members. Our teen group is active, but shrinking as our young people graduate and become more involved in school activities. Recently, a number of families with babies and preschoolers have come and we are striving to welcome them with open arms; consistent childcare is an expense that is never questioned.

The changes we see in our country are leading some Friends to call for Meeting to be more active in world affairs. The pace of change often seems to call for quick action, yet we want to be certain our work flows from love and compassion, not partisanship and that it adheres to the Quaker process of group discernment. In response, a working group on civic engagement is arising in conjunction with Friends from San Jose Meeting. Friends express urgency about different issues, but feel a common desire to protect our vulnerable communities, speak truth to power, and make Quaker values known outside our own communities. Under the guidance of Ministry and Counsel we have held public meetings for worship in Palo Alto and have invited those from other faiths, the wider community and passersby to join our circle. We plan to continue these on a regular basis, perhaps in different nearby cities.

Just as we considered laying down our retreat, many felt the 50th anniversary of the Harvest Festival was its “last hurrah”. Changes made during that event and information from the threshing session are leading another working group to continue to plan for the 51st. Community members who were drawn in by last year’s Steering Committee are now participating in the working group and the group has recognized the need to continue to lessen the burden of work needed to stage the event. We wait to see what comes forth.

We continue to hear expressions of concerns about the future of our Meeting such as:

- While our Meeting has a steady flow of newcomers, most don’t return. How can we encourage them to come back? How can we better express on a consistent basis the Quaker messages of compassion, healing, hope and community so our Meeting and our faith will continue to grow?
- Our Meeting seems less successful in supporting individual spiritual journeys than some other meetings. How can one individual’s spiritual seeking be melded into our community’s journey?
- Our Meeting lacks cultural, ethnic, racial and age diversity; the latter is particularly worrying, in that most members are over 50 years of age. What can we do?

We continue to strive towards becoming a community of Faithful Friends who seek to be led by spirit and who feel deep connections with each other. Like Friends everywhere, we find this is not as easy as we would like, but our work over the past two years has deepened our commitment to continuing that work.

Redding Friends Meeting Spring 2017 State of the Meeting Report

We continue as a small and active Meeting. Our youngest member turned 64 this year. Aging and health have become increasingly restricting. One Friend resides in an assisted living facility. He remains connected to our Meeting through our monthly mid-week meeting where he lives. Another Friend is considering a move out-of-state to live near family. An active couple in the Meeting plans to travel abroad for about one-half of 2018. We are not ready to lay down our Meeting but need to look at plans to scale back, at least for awhile.

Even with our small numbers, we have been activists. We support formerly homeless families living in a transitional housing program called Faithworks. We held a “Meet the Quakers” event for members of the First United Methodist Church, which hosts our Meeting. For this event, we found it informative to present select videos from the Quaker Speak series. We have also been invited to put on another “Meet the Quakers” presentation for the Episcopal Church. We continue to be involved with our community’s Interfaith Forum. Some Friends participated in the Women’s March held earlier this year. One member worked with the Methodists on prison reform. This committee showed a TED talk by Bryan Stevenson, led a Just Mercy book group, and presented the documentary 13th community at-large. Members are involved with the Martin Luther King Center and with a neighborhood association to reach out to City Hall. Some of us serve on local program boards; one serving people with disabilities and another serving at-risk, first time mothers.

We enjoy our Meeting family. We help and encourage each other. We continue our monthly tradition of Dinner Among Friends along with our annual retreat. Several of us attended Chico Meeting and felt uplifted by this experience. Three of us attended fall Quarterly at Sierra Friends Center, where one member continues his service on the board.

Redwood Forest Friends Meeting State of the Meeting Report, 2015 and 2016

In 2014, according to our last State of the Meeting Report, Redwood Forest Friends Meeting had “planted a variety of seeds that sprouted buds”: seeds of “deepening our relationship with the Divine and to enrich our connections with each other”. 2017 finds us stunned and sorrowing as a Meeting at the state of the world, more than celebrating continued growth due to careful tending. Our energy flags, yet we are called and compelled to resist the complacency, separation, fear and cruelty in ourselves, our Meeting and the world.

The political situation has served as a mirror for our shadow sides. Our individual efforts are not enough; it is difficult to even see, much less address our unconscious biases. The inequality, polarization and exclusion in our larger community and world are heart-breaking. The bright spots and successes addressing them have come through cooperating with groups in community, joining in common efforts to find ways to welcome the stranger, refugee, disenfranchised and poor in spirit among us.

A Homeless Interest Group coalesced when we were approached in the fall of 2015 to prayerfully consider providing a home on our Meeting grounds for a local homeless encampment. After gathering input from neighbors, the county, and all our committees we discerned we did not have unity to provide this. There was joy and aliveness in the months-long effort to unite in this corporate action as a Meeting, for we do not often address such momentous corporate leadings, and though we did not regret our discernment or decision, we felt disappointed that we did not find unity to proceed. More recently, an attender has asked for support for a Tiny Home Village she and other groups are launching as one way to address the acute affordable housing shortage.

Some among us have joined a de-militarization of our police effort through the Community for Oversight of Law Enforcement (COLE). Cooperating with an Interfaith Group on Immigrant Rights, we created a Sub Committee on Refugee Children. We have continued to serve as members of the North Bay Organizing Project, AVP, and the Interfaith Council of Sonoma County in its efforts to counter Islamophobia. We are maintaining our crucial and effective ministries in Guatemala and Bolivia. All these efforts rely on energy beyond our Meeting alone.

A new attender asked of our community, “Where is the joy?” Another left after months of attending because she felt we were neither a friendly nor open system. We have more to learn about welcoming the newcomer and creating inclusive and transparent community for all of us. Providing a deeper spiritual communion which inspires and transforms each person and builds the beloved community is our aim. We yearn for these places where we miss the mark to become visible and ourselves empowered by Spirit to change. We pray for divine help, and God is listening, for some have been moved to tears by the depth and beauty of the silence found in worship, and our Meeting ministry has begun to reflect a glimmer of new life and Light. Our Care Committee lovingly reaches out to those among us who ask for help with the daily needs of living; our Men’s and Women’s Groups, small spiritual deepening groups and the new Working Group on Racism are places we share our vulnerabilities.

As spring 2017 has come to Sonoma County, we rejoice in the maturation of our courtyard’s plantings, creating a serene, sacred space. Maturation takes time. Nature guides us. We are focusing on another bright shaft of Light in our midst: a growing number of young “sprouts”, i.e. joyous children. We have recently formed a new standing committee of Religious Education for all ages.

We are awakening as a Meeting to the need to trust in God to lead us away from this culture of separation and individualism, and to ask for help. Accepting God’s love, together we can find

ways of transcending opposites by uniting in blessed community. We envision a time—we hope it's soon—when we can describe our state of the Meeting once again by joining voices: "Since love is lord of heaven and earth, how can I keep from singing?"*

*From "How Can I Keep from Singing?" a well loved Quaker hymn.

* * * * *

Under our care are three worship groups. Here's a note from them to add to our Report:

Friends House Worship Group State of the Meeting

At Friends House, about 25 gather every Sunday, half a dozen of whom do not live at Friends House. While the lack of committee responsibilities is welcome to most participants, some wonder if a lack of depth in relationships and ministry is one result. There is very little interface with monthly, quarterly or yearly meetings.

Lake County Worship Group has 6-8 attenders, we meet 3 times a month in attenders' homes and one time a month online and hold with a strong sense of connection to the regional meetings.

Ukiah Worship Group

We are a stable group of 10, a combination of seasoned Friends and those new to Quakerism, meeting each Sunday at the Plowshares Peace and Justice Center. Every couple of months we prepare and serve lunch to our large local homeless population. We value our connections to RFFM and the wider world of Quakerism. In the summer of 2015 we enjoyed a day long workshop with Kathy and Bob Runyan from Quaker Center. Recently, four of us drove down to attend FCNL's Executive Director Diane Randall's talk at Friends House in Santa Rosa. We welcome visitors.

Reno Friends Meeting: State of the Meeting 2016

Reno Friends Meeting had a broadly positive year. We are in good financial health with a growing number of families contributing in various ways. We offer Northern Nevada a weekly silent worship in a well-maintained Meeting House. We hosted adult education classes, discussion groups and social events throughout the year. We are grateful for the steady stream of interested newcomers, who are welcomed and valued.

We sit in silence every First Day, aiming to be led by the Spirit in meaningful worship. We strive to take the peace, equanimity and light we experience in Meeting for Worship into our daily life, sharing it with those around us. We feel love and gratitude for each other and our Monthly Meeting. We encourage vocal ministry and accept that there is no “right” way to share. We appreciate all mindful and meaningful messages.

We aim for a sense of the Meeting when gathered for business matters and have encountered few controversial issues this year – hence Quaker process in this area has not been tested. We are sometimes challenged with keeping continuity and rhythm. Our Meeting includes members who travel often and/or have multiple homes and/or care for family members outside of Northern Nevada. This leads to less than robust and regular attendance but we are learning how to delegate tasks and support member engagement even when absent from Reno.

The Meeting attempted to clarify and update some policies, including use of the Meeting House by outside groups and better practices for responding to charitable requests. These efforts are important, and bring transparency and clear process, fostering a more equitable community. We need to improve and better organize systems around communication, archiving, agenda-setting and minutes.

This year’s activities included: a Quaker 101 class of ten sessions to broaden our spiritual experience and education; a series on prayer; monthly potlucks, some with speakers from local non-profits; and a winter holiday collaboration with a local non-profit that works with the homeless population in Reno. There is renewed interest in the Meeting to take our principles into the community and increase our social action initiatives. The Meeting continued its substantial financial support for the Nevada Alternatives to Violence Project and hosted one of their training workshops. It also provided a meeting place for the Adult Children of Alcoholics, The Art of Living, and Amnesty International.

More members and attenders struggled with health and personal issues this year. We were better able to help meet their spiritual and practical needs by engaging more members in activities. We reached out to our centenarian neighbor, visited a member in a rehabilitation center and opened our doors to a member to celebrate her 90th birthday with family and Friends/friends. We recognize that we have increasing elder-care issues, and are learning to address them.

Our membership increased by one this year, with a transfer of membership from the Monteverde Monthly Meeting, Costa Rica, bringing our total to fourteen. One of our members is sojourning to Inland Valley Monthly Meeting. Most of our members are active, and we continue to grow and strengthen. Attender ranks have grown considerably in the past two years, with several committed newcomers and many others who drop in regularly. Our efforts to improve the website, do more personal outreach to newcomers, and hold classes on Quaker principles (as a follow-up to our 2015 Quaker Centering workshop) encouraged more attendance. We enjoy the fresh perspective newcomers bring. Our leadership continues to be strong, and increasingly includes the sharing of tasks and wide-spread support.

Our budget is strong and stable, and we are grateful that the number of families contributing to the Meeting nearly doubled. Financial contributions are an affirmation of the commitment demonstrated by some of our newer attenders. Our Meeting House is well-maintained by a dedicated team overseeing its needs. Many of us help on cleanup days and special projects.

We have a general sense of rootedness and feel the presence of those who have come before us. Many Friends have worked hard over the years to establish the Reno Friends Meeting, purchase and renovate our Meeting House and provide a spiritual home. Our deep-rooted apple tree calls Friends to collect from her bounty. For all of this, we are most grateful.

Gina Russo, Oversight & Ministry

Wendy Swallow, Meeting Clerk

Sacramento Friends Meeting State of the Meeting report for 2017

We come together as a community of faithful Friends to worship, work and tend to each other as needed. We find that retreats bring us together as a community. We also enjoy the fellowship that Friendly Eights potlucks provide. Our Oversight Committee helps us with mutual care and support. First Day School is a strong priority and when the children come in to worship it feels like a sparkling warm spirit. We take joy in the children's progress and growth over the years. Our youth group presented us with a talent night and their group continues to meet monthly. Our Website and Facebook presences have been improved and are attracting new attenders. We have a faithful and busy Building and Grounds Committee that has kept our meetinghouse and grounds beautifully.

In order that we may all participate and be informed email broadcasts are sent out to everyone as needed. We have an excellent monthly newsletter that goes out to our members and attenders, newcomers, and other Monthly Meetings. One of our members does book reviews for the newsletter. Many in our Meeting have attended workshops at Quaker Center, Pendle Hill online classes, Pacific Yearly Meeting annual session and College Park Quarterly Meeting. Our active Worship and Ministry Committee has provided programs that have fostered our spiritual growth. We have welcomed four new members, including one transferring.

We have several active interest groups under the care of the Peace and Social Concerns Committee: alternatives to violence, eco-spirituality, African student scholarships, ending human trafficking, prisoner packages, and undocumented student scholarships. The Peace and Social Concerns Committee gives financial support to East Bay Sanctuary Covenant to provide legal assistance for Unaccompanied Minors.

Outside of Meeting we support individuals in their involvement in peace and social concerns. We are educated by what these individuals are doing when they bring back their reports. We support our local Homeless program Loaves and Fishes with Christmas stockings and we continue with our longtime Christmas Prisoner Package Program.

As we try to live in the Light, we are able to see areas that need our attention. We'd like more publicity for our events. Do we have enough opportunity to reflect on what it means to be a Quaker in our world? How do we provide education on what it means to be a Quaker for our newcomers? We feel a need for like-minded groups to rent our building; this was one of our goals when we opened the Meetinghouse. We would like more members and attenders to come to Family Night. There are concerns that we are not exercised enough about climate change both as a Meeting community and as individuals.

Can we share the load carried by Oversight as they seek to care for the Meeting? Many help each other out without going to Oversight Committee. As a community what is our best way to care for and about each other?

We are humbled by the movement of the Spirit as we grow in realizations of the Divine.

State of the Meeting Report
San Francisco Friends Monthly Meeting
Fourth Month 2017

San Francisco Monthly Meeting continues to serve as a place of worship, service, and care, in its home at the heart of one of the most expensive cities in America for housing. The life of the meeting has come in many forms: providing a food pantry and care for the local community, care of our fellowship through worship, visitation with infirmed or distant members, prayer, nonviolent and Bible study groups, several Meeting sponsored retreats, and committee work. We continue to explore the depths of our spiritual lives while caring for our Meeting and our meetinghouse.

Last year, our nominating committee was able to find clerks and staff committees fully--a great success over previous years where committees were lacking members and/or clerks. This enabled improved workings of the Meeting from end-to-end, with many big decisions able to be made, and second hours and events held to better support Meeting beyond the basics. This created a stable environment for Spirit to flow. Some factors implemented included reducing the minimum number of members on several committees, creating more co-clerking roles, and providing support for new clerks through semi-regular Clerks' breakfasts.

Several committees which traditionally have had a single clerk, now have co-clerks which share duties, namely Ministry and Oversight, Property and Finance, and Peace and Social Concerns. This change has served the meeting well, as clerking duties are shared as well as creating an increased number of "contact points" for meeting members and attendees. This has required an increase in communication for clerks, but this has served these committees well. Several other committees do not meet regularly but attempt to continue the work of the meeting, but often find communication and coordination of their responsibilities challenging without this in-person time together, which is replaced by other forms of communication such as email or telephone, or with few or no meetings. Some committees, such as Welcoming, have functioned well without any meetings.

Property and Finance has offered several second hours on Meeting property and finance issues, including discussion of our neighborhood and its ongoing issues of poverty, drug use, and crime which comes, literally, to our doorstep. Meeting feels spirit leading us in our current location by several ways: by improved care of the front by meeting employees and by playing host to rental groups which align with our Meeting as well as service to the neighborhood's condition, such as Downtown Streets Team. Our building continues to serve the need for low cost rental space in downtown San Francisco to non-profits which serve missions similar to our testimonies and faith. Additionally, these rentals help further the financial health of our Meeting through rental fees. Continuing maintenance of our aging facility, payment of a building manager, and slight improvements continue to take Meeting's time and resources but are supported by these rentals as well as a slight increase in this year's donations to Meeting by its members and attenders.

Ministry and Oversight has worked on care and concern for missing or absent members who have not attended or been seen in several years or who have lost contact with our Meeting. Outreach to these members in the form of letters, phone calls, emails, and other resources has

meant thirteen memberships were laid down. Our roll is now more reflective of our current state of membership than in the past ten or more years. This work will continue but has generated an ongoing discussion of what membership means in the context of San Francisco Friends Meeting as we continue to serve as an entry point for Quaker membership while members also tend to leave the community after a sometimes brief stay among us.

Peace and Social Concerns Committee's focus on food ministry for the past several years has left the committee little time for other areas or issues. The weekly food pantry has a healthy number of volunteers from the community, as well as food supply for distribution; while members and attenders from Meeting are relatively few, there is still support. While the light of this ministry has been strong, it is mainly held by those outside of the Meeting, and much appreciation is given toward this work.

Areas of growth in the Meeting include families with children who now come more often and in larger numbers to meeting; this has brought renewed interest and care to our Children's Religious Education Committee and program and increased attendance in our once-a-month Children's Breakfasts. Street ministry and nonviolent training continue, but are becoming more integrated into Meeting life and practices with efforts to "cross train" Friends who need these skills in their work at Meeting.

Activists and seekers have recently become more visible at Meeting, possibly due to the election of President Donald Trump. As such, we are now asked to welcome the stranger, [as our Christian faith commands](#)¹ more regularly and with intensified focus. We continue to serve as a "teaching meeting" for those encountering Quakers for the first time, or returning after a long absence, to be among us. Our work continues to raise a new set of clerks, increase participation in committees, and continue religious education for those seeking the roots of Quaker faith. The changing nature of our City continues, and its move away from the middle-class work and toward a "gig" economy will continue to challenge our meeting. We will continue to seek faith, guidance, perseverance, and care in this time of continuing change for our meeting.

Respectfully submitted,

Chad Stephenson, Clerk of San Francisco Monthly Meeting

¹ <https://www.openbible.info/topics/welcoming_strangers>

State of the Meeting Report
San Jose Friends Meeting
1041 Morse Street, San Jose, CA 95126
March 12, 2017

After several years of planning and effort by our First Day School Committee, San Jose Friends Meeting is enriched by the participation of more children and young families and, overall, by more fellowship. We are now using Facebook along with our newsletter and a group email service, with the goal of improved participation and outreach for the meeting. Our weekly attendance averages 16–24. Members and attenders say they feel greater connectedness with the meeting. In the hope of encouraging the amount and quality of verbal ministry, the practice of calling for “Afterwards” immediately following the hour of worship is being reconsidered.

Meeting wishes to increase the number of members; many are actively seeking ways to grow the meeting. We are a small meeting, and it is difficult to fill key positions and to find volunteers to serve on committees. A few people are doing a lot of work. Despite these difficulties, the meeting is maintaining the property and most committees. Our system of having co-clerks for business meeting is functioning well. In September, meeting welcomed our new Friend in Residence, Cedar Green. We continue to share our facilities with ten community groups that meet on the property on a weekly basis. The Unity with Nature Committee organized many new events this year aimed at hands-on engagement, education, and advocacy. We were enriched by “Quaker Center on the Road,” which formed the basis of our well-attended retreat at home in June of 2016.

Many members and attenders are apprehensive about the results of the last election. We want to work together to promote the Quaker testimonies in our larger society, effect change, and alleviate our sense of dread. Thirty of us participated in the “Women’s March” in San Jose. Some hope to form a special committee to focus on opposition to anticipated policies of the Trump administration.

The meeting is also contemplating substantial improvements to the property, in order, among other things, to accommodate wheelchair access. We are particularly appreciative of the work of the Property Committee and the Accessibility Project Committee entrusted with maintaining the property and making preparations for significant and costly improvements to our meeting house, which was built in 1885.

San Jose Friends Meeting consists of 30 members, a decrease of three due to the death of longtime members Dennis Coffey, David Weller, and Richard Dale, who was 101.

Despite some difficulties, we are confident and hopeful as we are led by our beliefs to seek a way to promote peace, justice, and hope during these times of suffering from injustice, war, and many grave global environmental concerns.

Santa Cruz Friends Meeting State of the Meeting for 2016

2016 was a busy year for Santa Cruz Friends Meeting. We welcomed six new members and bid farewell to a dear longtime member who passed away after 108 years of a life that deeply touched and mentored so many of us. The loss is keenly felt, especially during worship where she sat for many years. There has been an increase in the number of young adults attending Meeting. One member said, "The Santa Cruz Meeting is flourishing," and that opinion seemed to resonate with the group. Many younger people are interested in the community garden, which seems to have become an intergenerational focal point.

Although we laid down our midweek worship for the time being, other ongoing activities continue to enrich the community, including early morning worship at Quaker Center, a men's group, spiritual life stories, newcomer teas, and women's gatherings. We had a weekend retreat at Quaker Center in the spring that was enjoyed and valued by all who attended and a one-day retreat in the fall that led to a spiritual companion program. The Worship and Ministry committee has sponsored Quaker Explorations on the first and third Sundays before worship, experimented with occasional extended Meetings for worship, and tried different ways of including a time for speaking of joys and sorrows within worship. We finished a series of Quaker Sixes dinners at the beginning of the year and look forward to the start of another series in January.

One of our concerns continues to be the manner in which Meeting can be an effective presence in Santa Cruz. Efforts continue to improve our Internet presence and we now have a Facebook page. Friends once again marched in the June pride parade and made plans for next year to consider both celebratory and serious messages that reflect our history and testimonies. Our meeting supports, anchors and sustains Friends who continue to do Alternatives to Violence Project work in the state prisons, as well as supporting AVP with a grant. Over 30 people from Meeting volunteered at the Winter Shelter during January for 7 days, preparing and serving food for the 50 guests at the VFW Hall. Donations from our Meeting of hats, gloves, and socks for homeless people continue to be distributed.

We are pleased that in addition to providing a home for us our building continues to serve the community in many ways. Multiple non-profits use it as a meeting space and the parking lot continues to host a weekly food giveaway for leftover produce from the farmer's market. An effort is underway to convert our garden area into a community garden. The Meeting was glad to continue offering the Meetinghouse to the Warming Shelter Program during the past winter and it also continued as a backup site for Faith Community Shelter.

The Meeting has been strongly affected by the November election. Many members are strengthening their resolve to become more proactive about political change. Friends are preparing to meet the challenges the times present. Quakers have been, and can be, a beacon for other groups. As we move into 2017, Friends expressed the sense that Meeting is ready to get things done, that our corporate expectation for action is higher than it has been. We realize that not all of us share the same political views. We need to remain sensitive to these differences as we take action. What do we do when we are not in unity?

Our revitalized Peace and Social Justice Committee has worked energetically with the focus of supporting FCNL and FCL-CA's efforts. The Committee inspired our Meeting to contribute to major fund raising efforts for FCL/CA, first by collaborating with Palo Alto Meeting in their Harvest Festival, and then by raising \$4000 at our Santa Cruz fundraiser. Knitters took out

their needles making items that added to the fund raising efforts. In February, our own FCNL-trained Advocacy Team was formed. The Team worked hard on criminal justice reform, making lobbying visits in California and Washington DC to our senators and representatives, as well as writing letters to the editor. Our Advocacy Team also sponsored a workshop with FCL-CA to train us to lobby for FCL-CA issues. Participation on the Team has attracted several new attenders to Meeting. Peace & Social Justice cosponsored a well-attended community dialogue and discussion on race, as well as a viewing of the film "Cracking the Code." We are reminded that we need to ground everything we do in Spirit; that we are the Religious Society of Friends and not a political group.

Our Friends in Unity With Nature Committee continues to address climate change, cosponsoring an ecumenical conference on the Moral Dimensions of Climate Change. The committee met with congressional member Sam Farr to urge co-sponsorship of the Gibson Resolution and the PREPARE Act. Nature walks and picnics deepened our connection with nature and each other, but every time we tried to have a Monarch Butterfly picnic, it rained.

We are grateful for the continued service of our childcare worker who has cared for our pre-school kids for ten years. However, we are saddened by the decline in participation of older kids. Most of the kids who were active a few years ago have either moved from the area, or have grown and become involved in other activities. We have not had a functioning Children's Committee for more than a year, a situation that we would like to change. We continue to hold our baked potato fund raiser on Second Sundays for Jacob's Heart, a wonderful organization which supports families of children who have cancer.

Some Friends have expressed concern that we are missing opportunities to interface with UCSC interfaith organizations. Although a Quaker presence was a part of the Interfaith Council in the past, it has not been for quite a while. There is also a student interfaith group that meets weekly, either with a spiritual leader for a worship service or a group visit to one local Santa Cruz faith community service. Our Meeting could invite this group to our Meeting for Worship one Sunday, and host them during Fellowship. Such activities on our part could provide not only a Quaker presence on campus, but also serve as outreach.

We are glad to report that financially Meeting is doing fine; committees are prudent with expenditures and our income is sufficient for our needs. We are able to continue to care for our building. The longtime tenant (NVC) of the second story of the fellowship building moved out in May and we struggled for a few months with a variety of visions for the space before deciding to simply find a new tenant.

We have members who can no longer attend Meeting and we have members who need temporary help. Our Community Care committee tries to be sensitive to both their stated and unstated needs, realizing that we must be attentive to the pastoral as well as the physical. We have a member of Meeting who has been in jail for four years awaiting trial for a serious offense; visits by multiple friends were curtailed and only one member of meeting is now allowed to go in a ministering capacity. Our Meeting continues to struggle with ongoing pain and confusion around the member's situation and charged offense.

Friends continue to be active in, and nurtured by connection with, the greater Quaker community through activities with Quarterly and Yearly Meeting, as well as attending Friends General Conference. One Friend noted that it's valuable to extend out to others across the country and experience Quaker connections on a much broader level.

Approved at the May 14, 2017 Business Meeting

Strawberry Creek Monthly Meeting State of the Meeting 2017

Clerk of Meeting: Ralph Murphy.
Alternate Clerk: Rachel Findley.
Recording Clerk: Stephen McNeil.

Remembering that the full name of our tradition is The Religious Society of Friends of the Truth, we ask how has Truth fared among us this year? In the midst of the tumult, we reach down toward the Root where we may find calm, and joy, and Life. From this plowing up have come new shoots.

Meeting for Worship

For much of 2016, events in the larger society had a great impact on Meeting for Worship at Strawberry Creek. Overall attendance at meeting has gone up though a few individuals have stopped coming. Facilities Committee has added additional rows of chairs. Sometimes, those new to Strawberry Creek or new to Quakerism have brought with them new and different understandings of the role of Meeting for Worship and of spoken ministry that long-time members of the community have found unsettling. Our Worship and Ministry Committee has responded to the presence of this new energy - actively working with those new to meeting, widely distributing a pamphlet that describes our meeting's understandings, initiating a second mid-week Meeting for Worship, and offering an education series on Meeting for Worship.

Meeting for Worship at Strawberry Creek Monthly Meeting remains gathered, centered and settled. Indeed, some Meetings for Worship in the past year have been particularly so. We are grateful for the gift of worship handed down to us by early Quakers in establishing the practices of Quakerism. We come away from Meeting for Worship feeling that Spirit was present and moving in the meeting and that Meeting for Worship had enriched our lives and opened our hearts.

Life of the Meeting

Our Meeting as a whole has been more deeply involved in society over the past year. Now more than ever we are called to undertake much more work, both in support of the Meeting and in the larger society, than we can possibly take on; so we must always seek ways to prune away that which is not essential in accordance with our testimony on simplicity.

The community has had some difficulty involving and retaining new arrivals and young adults. Care of the Meeting Committee is discussing ways to respond to this concern, and to better welcome newcomers and fresh ideas, including the creation of a Welcoming working group.

In a number of contexts, friends have expressed the desire for smaller, more intimate gatherings where we might get to know each other better, such as cluster groups, worship sharing, and small group meals. Individual community members have brought people together in a number of informal gatherings.

Nominating Committee has had continuing difficulty filling all of the positions in Meeting standing committees; this year, Peace, Earthcare and Social Witness was particularly affected. At the same time, working groups and ad hoc committees have formed to address

existing and arising needs. These less formal groups make it possible for people to engage without making a yearlong commitment, and yet participate more fully in the life of the Meeting, undertake Meeting tasks in new ways, and respond to the leadings of the Spirit in ways that the formal structure may not serve well. In the past year our meeting's two retreats were convened in this manner, as was a regular Saturday play group, a continuing work group on Power, Privilege and Race, and a worship group for activist Quakers. We will continue to work to make our committees functional and inviting.

There has been a significant increase in the number of children attending our First Day Children's Program. The First Day Children's Program has in the not too distant past experienced some challenges. We are encouraged and delighted that attendance has increased significantly in the past year and that the program is robust and engaging. Some parents have expressed a strong interest in developing a curriculum of (absorbing, deep) Quaker religious education that in future may be brought to the children in the Children's Program.

Looking for Truth

On January 29, 2017, the Writing Committee convened a listening meeting after Rise of Meeting at the Berkeley Technology Academy. The general sense from that meeting was overwhelmingly positive. Being aware of other concerns, the committee met with a number of other individuals and committees separately to identify additional positives and challenging aspects of our spiritual lives as a Meeting.

Final notes

The Worship and Ministry committee oversees anchoring committees to support the work of six Friends who engage in ministry beyond the Meeting, often beyond the Religious Society of Friends.

Strawberry Creek does a good job of caring for the members of the meeting community. Our social hour after Rise of Meeting is always lively and rich. We seek to be faithful to the guidance of the Spirit which we can feel in the deep silence of our worship and in our Meeting for Business.

VISALIA FRIENDS MEETING 2017 STATE OF THE MEETING REPORT

The Meetinghouse is filled with abundant light. Beyond a wall of glass doors, the room opens onto green lawn, rail fence, and unkept woodland. A Valley Oak, grown large, shades the grounds. Inside, on the mantle of a stone fireplace, a bouquet of fresh flowers adds a simple beauty to an otherwise plain room. Through two colonial-grid windows on each side of the hearth can be seen a woodshed, no longer used in an age of air pollution, and under some pine trees a frame house with shingled siding that resembles a cabin in the Sierra to the east. Beneath some trees at the edge of the property, a knee-high stone wall creates an alcove for memory and reflection. On the bench-top of the wall, bronze plaques sit in a gently curved row, honoring the Meeting's departed.

Happy to be in this place, we sit, small in number, each isolated in our own thoughts and feelings. The silence and peace is a welcome respite in our busy lives, but we know that worship calls for us to realize together whatever is present in the silence. Settling in, we push aside petty concerns to focus on what's important.

Someone looks at the flowers on the mantle and thinks of the Friend who each Sunday picks and lovingly arranges them. Feeling joy in the presence of the others, she has a sense of being in a loving community of friends who can depend on each other. She remembers how often others of the Meeting have mentioned this same feeling.

Another thinks of the book shelves behind him and remembers the recent dramatic reading of "A Late Night Conversation," a one-act play written by a member, which featured eight of the books' authors conversing about the Visalia Friends Meeting. These writers recognize a history of accomplishment as this small group tried to bring Light to a troubled community, but they express concern about the present vitality of the Meeting. Looking around, the member sees only a few of the people who might have attended this worship and recognizes that average First Day attendance is diminishing, yet he also knows that the turnout for the Reader's Theater was good and that the performance stimulated thought. It seems that if there is a publicized event, people will come. Almost everyone comes to the annual Easter Breakfast Potluck and Worship held outdoors under a large oak tree.

Minutes pass and the room remains silent. Some wonder if they should speak, but knowing that one shouldn't speak just to speak, they think about what they would say. In the continuing silence it is difficult to sense the deep connection of a "gathered meeting." Many have good feelings from being with people they have worked and played with, people who love and respect each other who have been brought together by shared values and struggles.

Collectively they donate to good causes, organizations promoting the values they share: social justice and peace. In the past year nineteen Visalia Friends walked together in Crop Walk, an event to raise funds to feed needy families, locally and globally. They led all other churches in the amount raised. Participants in recent local demonstrations responding to disturbing world affairs have included many of us. On consecutive Friday evenings last fall, many of us attended a series of programs about San Joaquin Valley environmental and social concerns at the Reedley Peace Center. These and many other events create an affinity among us that shows we are connecting at a significant level. As we sit in silence we are aware of that.

In the back row, under the bookshelves, a Friend looks out at the bucolic scene with gratitude that now that we own that land, it will likely remain in its natural state and preserve the beauty of our site. Thoughts of the past and future come to her mind. She remembers the struggle to decide

whether to accept the gift of land and how it drove us apart and then brought us back together in common purpose. She remembers the debate about how opportunities had to be measured against the risks, and how the decision reflected an agreement to take the chance regardless of potential for trouble.

She feels hope in a vision of the possibilities for land of which its owner had said, “great things can happen here.” Having expected a slow process in the development of Quaker Oaks Farm, she is amazed at the progress of a small group of dedicated people. Quakers from Pacific Yearly Meeting, Lovett family members, local Wukchumni and Mixteca peoples, and a few members of our community, some actually living on the site, have joined to create a plan which includes sustainable farming, learning about and preserving local Native American culture, and conservation of habitat.

Across the room another person is wondering that if a small Meeting takes on a project that involves owning land, it would turn focus away from the primary purpose of a Meeting because it is putting its efforts into making the project succeed. The small number of people at worship and the lack of oral ministry is a continuing concern. Many of the more active people in the Meeting are getting older, and although some younger folks are carrying on essential tasks, learning to take responsibility for the Meeting, they are few in number. The loss of any one of these would diminish the human and monetary resources needed to sustain a Meeting as it passes from one generation to another.

Fifteen minutes before worship ends, the door opens and the children of the Meeting enter, happily dispersing to various parts of the room to find seats with their parents, grandparents, or friends. An elderly member breaks into a joyous smile, feeling, with others, a lift. He thinks, “there is the future of our Meeting.” Lately the number of children has grown. The Children’s Committee is busy providing care, entertainment, and learning experiences, but it is difficult because the number of children on a particular Sunday varies. A number of our creative people are ready to pitch in at a moment’s notice to provide interesting activities, but it’s impossible to create a sequence of lessons for First Day School.

Nevertheless, in many ways Quaker values are being passed on. Some of the children participate in Quaker activities beyond our Meeting. At PYM, Quarterly Meeting, Ben Lomand Quaker Center, and next door at Quaker Oaks Farm they are engaging in the larger Quaker Community, learning Quaker worship, decision making, and the testimonies that Friends have derived from how they live.

The elder feels hope, but he is perplexed also. He realizes these children are growing into a world he doesn’t really know, whose ways are not like the world his faith practices are based on. He can’t let go of his basic values but has a sense that change is needed. He also realizes that this is a situation shared by all Quaker Monthly Meetings along with their Quarterly and Yearly Meetings, not to speak of all the tradition-based churches. He thinks of the names on the memorial wall and what his predecessors had accomplished, feeling a sense of gratitude but knowing a Meeting can’t operate from the past.

So what is the state of our Meeting? If we integrate these perceptions and all the others from Visalia Friends, we may discover something about it, but we’ll never know for sure. There is evidence that, although our number of members remains stable, we are diminishing in the number of members and committed non-members who attend worship regularly. Yet, our small group remains active in Quaker faith and practice, involved in varied levels and sectors of a troubled world, donating, witnessing and serving. The future is filled with opportunity, but strength will be needed to seize that opportunity.