

Southern California Quarterly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends
Spring Gathering, April 28, 2018

State of the Meeting Reports, 2017
Meeting Responses to the Five Queries

Ministry and Counsel of the Southern California Quarterly Meeting suggested the following queries to guide the State of the Meeting Reports from our Monthly Meeting, finished in 2018 but reflecting the State of the Meeting for 2017.

The queries were as follows:

- 1. What are your greatest joys as a Meeting?**
- 2. Are your Business Meeting conducted in worship?**
- 3. What troubles or challenges are you facing?**
- 4. What do you yearn for as a Meeting?**
- 5. How do you put your faith into action?**

This report presents the State of the Meeting reports in two different formats:

- We have copied all of the State of Meeting Reports into the document as they came to us via email.**
- We have organized the State of the Meeting reports around the Five Queries and would note that some of the Meetings did not necessarily response to all Five Queries**

We have State of the Meeting Reports from Claremont Meeting, Conejo Valley Worship Group, Inland Valley Meeting, La Jolla Meeting, Las Vegas, NV Worship Group, Ojai Worship Group, Orange County Meeting, Orange Grove Meeting, San Diego Meeting, Santa Barbara Meeting, Santa Monica Meeting and Whitleaf Worship Group.

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Part I: Summary by Query

Query 1: Joys

What are your greatest joys as a Meeting?

Please note that Las Vegas, NV Worship Group did not respond to this query.

Claremont

- Worship serves as the foundation for all of life, fundamental to our continuing growth.
- We heard heartwarming, vibrant vocal ministries in Meeting for Worship this past year.
- Those who speak with vulnerability and truth offer the spiritual food we all need.
- Joys and Concerns spoken from the heart continue to deepen our loving connections.
- God is present in our ‘core of silence’: we thirst for this and are nourished by it.
- Some are grateful to find their way home to CFM after wearing other religious garments.
- We see God in many faces during worship, and in this threshing session.
- Meeting for Worship is the foundation upon which we build and rest with love from all.
- Children’s Meeting had too few adults to sustain the program we envisioned.
- In 2017 we held painfully honest threshing sessions and reframed our approach.
- Children’s Meeting has been greatly enriched since we hired two excellent staff persons.

Conejo Valley

A joy that we share is the strong sense of personal relationships and support among members and attenders.

Inland Valley

Greatest joys: Watching children and infants growing up within the care and love of our Meeting, and helping them along the path of discovery of what it means to be a Quaker, provides one of our greatest joys. The number of teens in our Meeting has risen. The richness of silent worship provides us with consistent joy and nourishment. It brings us joy when new attenders find us and enrich our Meeting with their contributions, including joining committees and eventually taking leadership roles. We share our joy and maintain the vitality of our Meeting with fellowship on many occasions, such as our annual Easter and Christmas gatherings and joint trips to explore and enjoy nature. The practice of listening for the Spirit and sharing vocal ministry continues to foster our sense of well-being.

La Jolla

We have a vibrant Community Committee that supports us with good food and fellowship. Our Property Committee has seen to it that our meeting house and cottage are maintained in a sound condition and will last for many years to come. Adult Religious Education committee provides weekly opportunities to discuss and learn about Quaker beliefs and practices. Our Retreat Committee organizes meaningful and well attended annual retreats. Several groups, such as the Men’s Group and the Scholarship Committee serve to support us in specific ways. We are

supported in our individual work through the Committee for Leadings. But the most essential element of our center proceeds from our meetings for worship. Through our weekly worship, we find a depth and connection with the divine that gives us the strength to carry our work into the world.

Ojai

Our greatest joys are making tea for one another, getting to know and connect with individuals in the group, welcoming visitors, and having a quiet dependable sanctuary to come together in.

Orange County

We find joy in our communal worship, caring, and action. In supporting one another — in a 16-year book group or in ongoing potlucks or in welcoming newcomers — we recognize our joy. We embraced one family spiritually, emotionally, and financially this year; we quietly embraced an aging member who needed assistance as his aging limited his options. Our Meetings for Worship are frequently “gathered” and the silence nourishing; our anxieties or personal concerns expressed openly. We have welcomed one new member this year and have two more in the process. We can and do support individual leadings.

Orange Grove

The numerous children at Meeting are a joy and the committee to educate them has been reinstated. Welcoming events are held for our new babies. A joyful clatter rises from the kitchen as more Friends participate in providing fellowship, something many of us learned visiting Quaker Center.

San Diego

After more than a decade of slowly losing our oldest members, we are pleased that San Diego Monthly Meeting is growing again, gaining new regular attenders who are eager to spread our Quaker values as we work toward our long term goals of a strong community and a cleaner environment, in a peaceful and just society.

Santa Barbara

Our joys as a meeting spring from the expression and celebration of our spiritual life. Shared passions provide a sense of community and a framework for our activism. Highlights included successful AVP prison workshops; interactions with youth facing difficult situations; a memorable radio interview with volunteers from Truth in Recruitment; the dedication of our Peace, Earth Care and Social Concerns Committee; and participation in our peace vigils and marches. Time spent with the Ojai Worship Group (under our care) and the Conejo Valley Worship Group (in close proximity to us) is particularly cherished. Our 4th Annual Retreat provided an opportunity for Friends to rejuvenate, share leadings, and catch up on one another's lives. Some Friends enjoy gathering once a month to participate in a healing circle or to sing and share music. A Thursday evening reading/study group meets in the home of one of our attenders. When families with small children visit our first-day school, we are especially delighted.

Santa Monica

Meeting is a place of peace, a place to grow during good times and bad. Friends celebrate the silence, the feelings of community and the contemplative dimensions of worship. One Friend said that she felt hopeful to be part of a group seeking love together. Friends felt a yielding to the Light, allowing it to transform us and to be open in coming to unity. One Friend said that the Meeting is a space to ponder the mysteries and to participate in a spiritual community. With joy, we celebrated the wedding of Rachel Fretz and Bob Tajima, held under the care of the Meeting. Another Friend said that she loved watching the kids grow up to be teens and seeing how free and loved they are.

Whitleaf

The group, while small in number, continues to thrive as an example of how regular, committed and effective just a few devoted Friends can be. In addition to first day meeting for worship, we practice corporate and individual ministries of support, influence, guidance and service as extensions of our Quaker faith and principles.

Query 2: Business Meetings and Worship

Are your Business Meeting conducted in worship?

Please note the following Meetings did not respond directly to this query: Conejo Valley, Las Vegas, NV Worship Group, La Jolla, Ojai, Orange Grove, San Diego and Whitleaf.

Claremont

- We are challenged to individually exercise greater self-discipline, thereby promoting more deeply centered worship and providing greater support to our clerk.
- Some committees need tender care and support to more adequately fulfill their role.
- Some Friends feel one hour is too short for waiting-worship when attending to business.
- Compassion is our currency in M4B; we need to amplify it as our coin of the realm.
- Intentional waiting worship calls our Clerk to be more in tune with God while Friends' expectant waiting evokes clearer messages from our Clerk.
- January M4B, held in the worship room, alternated between silence and business to create a deeply appreciated rhythm.
- Vocal ministry in meeting for worship moves us to participation in M4B as vocal ministry.

Inland Valley

Worshipful conduct of our Meetings for Business: Our Meetings for Business are held with the proper worshipful attitude with a shared appreciation for the directness and simplicity applied to the process.

Orange County

Here we could do better and have resolved to do so. We need intermittent reminders not to address one another but rather to address the Clerk. We come to Meeting with open minds but need to remain on topic in large and small ways. We must focus on worshipful participation with, perhaps, more silence buffering our commentaries. Continued reinforcement of proportion,

insofar as issues are concerned, would be helpful. We recognize the functionality of our nominating committee filling our rosters effectively and swiftly.

Santa Barbara

Like the meeting house itself and the sense of community we enjoy, our bimonthly meetings for worship on the occasion of business have been described as a "safe place," one of peace and refuge within a society "under stress." Our clerk skillfully encourages us to "come back to center" when our discussions begin to waver. Calls for silence prove helpful when we disagree or tension arises among Friends. We care deeply about one another and trust the process, so we tend to exhibit extraordinary goodwill and respect for each person's unique contribution.

Santa Monica

Friends appreciate the discernment process in Business Meetings and committees. Our Business Meetings are steeped in worship and listening.

Query 3: Challenges

What troubles or challenges are you facing?

Please note that San Diego Meeting did not respond directly to this query.

Claremont

- Nominating Committee might ask *What would you like to do? How can we help you?*
- Some see CFM as a fragmented collection of loving individuals, not yet in full unity.
- Children's Rooms are too full of stuff; our kids need clear, simple, open space.
- We have endowment money but are still discerning our call as a community in using it.
- How can assets give purpose & identity? How can resources animate our committees?
- 'Presentists' can find value in our Quaker tradition without knowing our whole history.
- How might students from five Claremont Colleges enrich our Meeting in small doses?

Conejo Valley

We are continuing to grow in faith but not in numbers. A long-time friend and attender left to pursue a different spiritual path; his absence is a great loss to us. Our numbers have further declined due to people moving, health challenges, travel and work. An ongoing challenge is to have a stable attendance. A member who has stopped attending has raised some concerns about his experience of our worship; we are discerning the best way to address those concerns.

Inland Valley

Inland Valley Friends Meeting continues to struggle in looking for our own permanent meeting house which would not only serve our needs but could also provide a space to share with like-minded community organizations. Our frustrations with this process have been many. Current obstacles revolve around looking at properties that would need to be brought up to code so we can obtain the Conditional Use Permit which the City requires. We are considering ways to join

with other like-minded groups.

Las Vegas, NV Worship Group

Like the phrase about work, our lives are more than just this meeting. Most attenders would say that we have our family, support system(s) and life outside Sunday worship. The queries are addressed to “the Meeting;” but we are hardly more than a one hour-a-week meditation group. We have no monthly business meeting, no committees, first day school, etc.

La Jolla

We face challenges and concerns. Events in the U.S. and across the globe continue to trouble us deeply. The pressures of our fast-paced lives and our widespread geographic distribution can make it difficult to connect with Friends outside of First Days. We are an aging group. We worry that there are not enough younger people joining us. Our First Day School attenders are precious to us all, but we hope to add to their numbers. Although we are enriched by those who have joined us recently, we seek ways to make ourselves known to the wider community. Our meeting has been blessed with a bequest. We are still working to find unity on how best to spend it. This has led us to an ongoing purposeful envisioning of our future.

Ojai

We are older and have experienced the death of one of our cherished Friends this year. We are dealing with health issues. We have had struggles with individual personality conflicts and have experienced a lack of flexibility and generosity with each other that has caused a drop in attendance, that causes us sorrow.

Orange County

The “elephant in the room” for us has been our decision to relocate OCFM to a situation that will better meet our needs. After multiple meetings for evaluation, polling the membership’s commitment, and a Talking Meeting, we find most Friends wish to move. A few are uneasy in this uncertain world, yet all pertinent aspects have been covered. The costs will not be simply cash but also personal time, creativity, and labor. Our site-search committee continues its quest for an appropriate venue.

As we consider relocation, we question whether we might do more to attract new seekers, attenders, and (eventually) members. We realize we need families to grow and provide more life for the meeting. And so, we must improve our outreach.

Orange Grove

One new attender notes that the silence is always good and the ministry sometimes. Another found lengthy ministry off-putting. A perception of unbalanced spiritual and political ministry spoke many Friends’ minds who participated in a session seeking input for this report.

Santa Barbara

This past year will stand out in our memories for a long time to come, due to the challenges we

and our neighbors faced with the Thomas Fire. Friends, family and acquaintances were displaced from their homes, struggled with a lack of air quality, and worked to support one another and the community as a whole in the midst of this devastation. Subsequent mudslides caused tragic loss of life and extensive property damage. In addition, we suffered a period of separation from friends and family to the south of us in Ventura County when flooding and the flow of debris caused a prolonged freeway closure. As a result of this, we are now partnering with La Casa de Maria, whose contemplative prayer groups now meet in our Meeting House.

Santa Monica

There is much we want to do to live our faith and strengthen our community. One Friend said that she would like to have a committee to visit people who have left the Meeting community. Another Friend recommended that the Meeting form small groups that support each other in spiritual growth. In addition, Friends urged that we explore ways to attract more young people and younger families and to communicate to the wider community. Another Friend said that it's a struggle to get enough new members to sustain committees and social action. We also note the resilience and strength of committees as new members join. We need to address the hard of hearing problems in our worship.

Whitleaf

On less positive notes of the year, two of our "family" passed away: Ignacio Marin, husband of Kathy O'Brien Marin, and Jeananne Wright Coop, wife of Lind Coop. Both held strong in long-term fights against debilitating conditions. The Whitleaf "family" of Friends continues to provide emotional and spiritual support for the Marin and Coop families.

Query 4: Yearnings

What do you yearn for as a Meeting?

Please note that the following Meeting did not respond to this query: Conejo Valley, Las Vegas, NV Worship Group, La Jolla, Ojai and San Diego

Claremont

Some have expressed that they

- Sense tension between valuing our way of worship and reaching out to others.
- Ask adults to initiate relationships with students & children, to show our care.
- Want uncluttered children's space open to Creation, Spirit and new families.
- Yearn to better understand the rules of conduct and the clerk's role in M4B.

Inland Valley

We yearn to continue to grow as a meeting, to find stability, to attract new families and to increase our knowledge and care for one another. Because of changes in members and attenders, our donations have decreased. This has forced us to make difficult financial decisions, which we hope will be erased in the future.

Orange County

Primarily, we long for transformation, i.e., families with children; and we want expansion, i.e., our own meetinghouse. We see more youngsters as the lifeblood of this Meeting. We long for the sense that the Meeting will be here even if we ourselves are gone. The question that nags us: Will there be someone to do my Memorial Minute? Our current level of outreach is somewhat scattered, as our members live in various locations. The vital Quaker activities of a few years ago in Southern California are now not there. A challenge to us and others to keep those going. We long for more ways for our Quaker families to meet with others.

Santa Barbara

Our yearnings as a meeting primarily center around our interpersonal relationships. We feel keenly the absence of families with children to attend our first-day school. A couple of Friends clerking committees sometimes experience a sense of overwhelm and are seeking more support and practical help from the meeting. While we wish for more participation among our attenders, we would also like to discover new ways to have our presence be better known in the larger community. At times, we as individuals crave acceptance, appreciation for our accomplishments, diversity, approval, as well as more time and energy for our social activism.

Santa Monica

Many Friends said that we don't have a strong enough communal identity, especially in connection with peace and social action. We seem to lack a larger vision and direction in our communal efforts to promote peace and social justice, despite a longing for a common purpose and more witness.

Whitleaf

We continue to pray for additional members so that the Light might shine more generally and extension of the good this little group can do for humanity might be increased.

Query 5: Faith and Action

How do you put your faith into action?

Please note that Las Vegas, NV Worship Group did not respond directly to this query.

Claremont

Claremont Homeless Advocacy Program continues to host overnight guests in our Meeting Room & Library as we have done 365 nights a year since February 2014. One Friend coordinates many interfaith volunteers in supporting, feeding and advocating.

Conejo Valley

As a Worship Group, individuals continue to bear Quaker Witness to the World through their lives as they are led. Some of these activities include being a part of the Afghan Girls School Committee, Alternatives to Violence facilitation in California Men's Colony, as well as other prison ministries, contributing to food rescue collection and distribution including delivery to home-bound seniors, and supporting a school in Turks and Caicos for Hurricane Irma

reconstruction. Our members support our local Islamic Center, as well as the wider Muslim community, and maintain interfaith and ecumenical connections with numerous spiritual and community service groups.

Inland Valley

We endeavor to attend meeting for worship and other meeting activities regularly. We continue to study our Quaker roots. We share our Quaker values with the community and support local activist organizations which work for peace and social justice. Members of our meeting have taken leading roles in some of these organizations, helping to organize and participate in marches and humanitarian events. We meet with those who are affected by discrimination, seeking and finding that of God in all. We recognize that everyone in Meeting has something to offer. By listening carefully to one another, we learn lessons on commitment, respect, empathy, compassion, inclusion, openness and social activism. We spend time in nature and teach our youth to respect and love our Earth.

La Jolla

By our actions and our work in the world, we seek to “let our lives speak”. Through committee work, through participation in the causes that move us, and through careers to which we have been called, La Jolla Friends continue to endeavor to speak our truth to the world. Some of us do this through careers such as education, health, and social work. There are a number who have retired and now devote much of their time to working for the Society in the Monthly, Quarterly and Yearly meetings. Friends have been moved to work for an end to the instruments of war through organizations such as Veterans for Peace. Many Friends continue to work with those who are incarcerated or homeless. Some Friends have organized an interest group around issues in healthcare and are advocating for an equitable health care system. To support the leading of a family who has taken in a Honduran refugee family, the meeting created the Asylum, Immigrant and Refugee (AIR) committee to oversee the meeting’s role in assisting them. We have provided financial and advisory support. Now this family is close to being self-sufficient.

Ojai

There are many ways we put our faith in action, though, not as many as we'd like. We share/or don't share on Facebook, we spend time on personal exploration, the results of which expands to others, we care for family and friends, both in and out of Meeting, we email as political activism, we pray and meditate individually and corporately, on line. Some of us are active on larger Quaker committees, in AVP, and on the Peaceable Kingdom journal.

Orange County

We reach out to the community with the formation of an FCNL Advocacy team, our presence at Irvine’s Global Village and OC Pride Festival, support of a women’s shelter, and letters to editor in large and small newspapers. Our young people raised funds for a water purification project. And we are pleased that this next generation has been helpful in joining in the Meeting’s care for our aging members and attenders. Individual leadings involve immigrant rights, mental health, and animal welfare. News of these activities hearten us, promoting further involvement

and dedication.

Orange Grove

We know that love is at the heart of our Meeting work, expressed through our lives of peace, justice, and service, and this is evident in our vigorous activism. At times confronting the world on the world's terms seems to conflict with the needs of our spirits. As an example, our efforts to create emergency safety plans with the police raised concerns that our spiritual values will be subordinated to theirs if deadly force is used.

San Diego

One member is past president of the local chapter of Veterans for Peace. Two members are involved in promoting Quaker values through political action on the local and state levels. Four members are authors, with publication during the year 2017. Many members are active in the larger Quaker Community of PYM. Several members and attenders worked with the ICWJ, the Interfaith Center for Worker Justice of San Diego. One works on his leading to develop and maintain closer ties between PYM and the *Casa de los Amigos* in Mexico City.

Santa Barbara

Happily, when the query, "How do you put your faith into action?" was posed to the meeting, the answer was a resounding, "Very well indeed!" Some Friends focus their attention on issues that concern them personally, while others receive a sense of leadership from the meeting and focus their efforts wherever needed most. Many new activities at our meeting house unite us as a body, and we continue to nurture Friends' work with various outreach ministries such as the Alternatives to Violence Project, Truth in Recruitment, peace vigils, Clergy and Laity United for Economic Justice, Transition House, and the Santa Barbara Clergy Association. Our broader goals derive from our testimonies as Friends, and our relationships with one another and the community support these goals. Friends tend to express the feeling that relationships are key here, and that the spiritual life of our meeting is effectively the background for our whole lives.

Santa Monica

We are searching for ways to deepen our worship and carry it outside the Meeting into our lives and the wider community. We are concerned about the difficult times in which we live, particularly relating to our government and injustice. While some feel the lack of a corporate vision, others are satisfied that many Friends, as individuals, put their Quaker faith into action and are committed to continue in this way. We are continuing to explore the finding of a "common purpose" in the Meeting. The Alice Herman Committee offered grants to Friends for deepening spiritual practices and understanding. One Friend said that the main thing is to strengthen and deepen our worship and find the spark in others. Friends urged us to be more actively involved in the larger society, to strengthen the Quaker voice and to build a more just and equitable society.

Whitleaf

With our general orientation to literacy and education, we continue to serve the community through volunteer tutoring at local grade schools, as well as reading and education programs, such as those conducted at the local Boys and Girls Club. Group member volunteer tutoring and mentoring extends as far as to university educational coaching and assistance. We are also involved in encouraging reading through the city-wide reading program, Whittier Reads. This group of Friends hold matters of political concern in high regard. Many of us are extensively involved in the local, regional, national and global conduct of action to bring about peace, nutrition, medical services, housing, and human rights – including specifically matters of racial and women’s rights. The matters of gun control and needs of the homeless continue to be important focal points for our action. Much of what we are able to do is carried out through support for organizations such as: FUM, FCNL, AFSC, ESR, peace coalitions, Habitat for Humanity, Heifer International, the American Bar Association, plus marches and petitions for positive social and political change.

PART II: State of the Meeting Reports by Meeting

CLAREMONT MEETING

Twenty-four Friends gathered on February 11, 2018 to consider five queries suggested by SCQM. Our responses will guide us in the coming year as we endeavor to re-pattern our lives through greater attentiveness to Love.

JOYS

- Worship serves as the foundation for all of life, fundamental to our continuing growth.
- We heard heartwarming, vibrant vocal ministries in Meeting for Worship this past year.
- Those who speak with vulnerability and truth offer the spiritual food we all need.
- Joys and Concerns spoken from the heart continue to deepen our loving connections.
- God is present in our 'core of silence': we thirst for this and are nourished by it.
- Some are grateful to find their way home to CFM after wearing other religious garments.
- We see God in many faces during worship, and in this threshing session.
- Meeting for Worship is the foundation upon which we build and rest with love from all.
- Children's Meeting had too few adults to sustain the program we envisioned.
- In 2017 we held painfully honest threshing sessions and reframed our approach.
- Children's Meeting has been greatly enriched since we hired two excellent staff persons.

CHALLENGES

- Nominating Committee might ask *What would you like to do? How can we help you?*
- Some see CFM as a fragmented collection of loving individuals, not yet in full unity.
- Children's Rooms are too full of stuff; our kids need clear, simple, open space.
- We have endowment money but are still discerning our call as a community in using it.
- How can assets give purpose & identity? How can resources animate our committees?
- 'Presentists' can find value in our Quaker tradition without knowing our whole history.
- How might students from five Claremont Colleges enrich our Meeting in small doses?

YEARNINGS Some have expressed that they

- Sense tension between valuing our way of worship and reaching out to others.
- Ask adults to initiate relationships with students & children, to show our care.
- Want uncluttered children's space open to Creation, Spirit and new families.
- Yearn to better understand the rules of conduct and the clerk's role in M4B.

MEETING FOR BUSINESS

- We are challenged to individually exercise greater self-discipline, thereby promoting more deeply centered worship and providing greater support to our clerk.
- Some committees need tender care and support to more adequately fulfill their role.
- Some Friends feel one hour is too short for waiting-worship when attending to business.
- Compassion is our currency in M4B; we need to amplify it as our coin of the realm.
- Intentional waiting worship calls our Clerk to be more in tune with God while Friends' expectant waiting evokes clearer messages from our Clerk.
- January M4B, held in the worship room, alternated between silence and business to create a deeply appreciated rhythm.

- Vocal ministry in meeting for worship moves us to participation in M4B as vocal ministry.

FAITH IN ACTION

- Claremont Homeless Advocacy Program continues to host overnight guests in our Meeting Room & Library as we have done 365 nights a year since February 2014. One Friend coordinates many interfaith volunteers in supporting, feeding and advocating.

Conejo Valley Worship Group

A joy that we share is the strong sense of personal relationships and support among members and attenders.

We are continuing to grow in faith but not in numbers. A long-time friend and attender left to pursue a different spiritual path; his absence is a great loss to us. Our numbers have further declined due to people moving, health challenges, travel and work. An ongoing challenge is to have a stable attendance. A member who has stopped attending has raised some concerns about his experience of our worship; we are discerning the best way to address those concerns.

We are in the process of updating the "Meetup" social networking app which had helped us welcome new attenders who are seeking a spiritual community.

Some of our worship group attend Orange Grove and Santa Barbara Meetings on the First Days we do not meet as the Conejo Valley Worship Group. In return, we welcomed visits from Orange Grove Friends. We enjoy being part of Pacific Yearly Meeting, Fall Fellowship, Spring Gathering and Santa Barbara Retreat.

As a Worship Group, individuals continue to bear Quaker Witness to the World through their lives as they are led. Some of these activities include being a part of the Afghan Girls School Committee, Alternatives to Violence facilitation in California Men's Colony, as well as other prison ministries, contributing to food rescue collection and distribution including delivery to home-bound seniors, and supporting a school in Turks and Caicos for Hurricane Irma reconstruction. Our members support our local Islamic Center, as well as the wider Muslim community, and maintain interfaith and ecumenical connections with numerous spiritual and community service groups.

We are grateful for the relationships and spiritual support that nurture us and ask our SCQM F/friends to hold us in the Light as we seek to grow and serve as we are led.

Inland Valley Meeting

Greatest joys: Watching children and infants growing up within the care and love of our Meeting, and helping them along the path of discovery of what it means to be a Quaker, provides one of our greatest joys. The number of teens in our Meeting has risen . The richness of silent worship provides us with consistent joy and nourishment. It brings us joy when new attenders find us and enrich our Meeting with their contributions, including joining committees and eventually taking leadership roles. We share our joy and maintain the vitality of our Meeting with fellowship on many occasions, such as our annual Easter and Christmas gatherings and joint trips to explore and enjoy nature. The practice of listening for the Spirit and sharing vocal ministry continues to foster our sense of well-being.

Worshipful conduct of our Meetings for Business: Our Meetings for Business are held with the proper worshipful attitude with a shared appreciation for the directness and simplicity applied to the process.

Troubles, challenges and yearnings: Inland Valley Friends Meeting continues to struggle in looking for our own permanent meeting house which would not only serve our needs but could also provide a space to share with like-minded community organizations. Our frustrations with this process have been many. Current obstacles revolve around looking at properties that would need to be brought up to code so we can obtain the Conditional Use Permit which the City requires. We are considering ways to join with other like-minded groups. We yearn to continue to grow as a meeting, to find stability, to attract new families and to increase our knowledge and care for one another. Because of changes in members and attenders, our donations have decreased. This has forced us to make difficult financial decisions, which we hope will be erased in the future.

Putting our faith into action: We endeavor to attend meeting for worship and other meeting activities regularly. We continue to study our Quaker roots. We share our Quaker values with the community and support local activist organizations which work for peace and social justice. Members of our meeting have taken leading roles in some of these organizations, helping to organize and participate in marches and humanitarian events. We meet with those who are affected by discrimination, seeking and finding that of God in all. We recognize that everyone in Meeting has something to offer. By listening carefully to one another, we learn lessons on commitment, respect, empathy, compassion, inclusion, openness and social activism. We spend time in nature and teach our youth to respect and love our Earth.

La Jolla Meeting

By our actions and our work in the world, we seek to “let our lives speak”. Through committee work, through participation in the causes that move us, and through careers to which we have been called, La Jolla Friends continue to endeavor to speak our truth to the world. Some of us do this through careers such as education, health, and social work. There are a number who have retired and now devote much of their time to working for the Society in the Monthly, Quarterly and Yearly meetings. Friends have been moved to work for an end to the instruments of war through organizations such as Veterans for Peace. Many Friends continue to work with those who are incarcerated or homeless. Some Friends have organized an interest group around issues in healthcare and are advocating for an equitable health care system. To support the leading of a family who has taken in a Honduran refugee family, the meeting created the Asylum, Immigrant and Refugee (AIR) committee to oversee the meeting’s role in assisting them. We have provided financial and advisory support. Now this family is close to being self-sufficient.

This work does not arise out of a vacuum. It emanates from the caring spiritual center that our monthly meeting and committee work provide. We have a vibrant Community Committee that supports us with good food and fellowship. Our Property Committee has seen to it that our meeting house and cottage are maintained in a sound condition and will last for many years to come. Adult Religious Education committee provides weekly opportunities to discuss and learn about Quaker beliefs and practices. Our Retreat Committee organizes meaningful and well attended annual retreats. Several groups, such as the Men’s Group and the Scholarship Committee serve to support us in specific ways. We are supported in our individual work through the Committee for Leadings. But the most essential element of our center proceeds from our meetings for worship. Through our weekly worship, we find a depth and connection with the divine that gives us the strength to carry our work into the world.

We face challenges and concerns. Events in the U.S. and across the globe continue to trouble us deeply. The pressures of our fast-paced lives and our widespread geographic distribution can make it difficult to connect with Friends outside of First Days. We are an aging group. We worry that there are not enough younger people joining us. Our First Day School attenders are precious to us all, but we hope to add to their numbers. Although we are enriched by those who have joined us recently, we seek ways to make ourselves known to the wider community. Our meeting has been blessed with a bequest. We are still working to find unity on how best to spend it. This has led us to an ongoing purposeful envisioning of our future.

It brings us comfort that we possess the resources to face our challenges and that our spiritual community will continue to nurture us and to provide a safe foundation from which we can continue to let our lives speak.

Respectfully submitted,
Elizabeth Bills, Susan Howe, and Steve Hobbes

Las Vegas,NV Worship Group

The informality of our small worship group is reflected in the lack of attention to detail in creating this report. There was no note taker for the two sessions of discussion of the above queries, and each session, one month apart, was minimally attended, even by our standards.

Like the phrase about work, our lives are more than just this meeting. Most attenders would say that we have our family, support system(s) and life outside Sunday worship. The queries are addressed to “the Meeting;” but we are hardly more than a one hour-a-week meditation group. We have no monthly business meeting, no committees, first day school, etc.

Our long-time convener died over the past year, and to his wishes, we have no plans for a memorial service.

Las Vegas Worship Group continues its status as an existential entity, committed only to this morning’s worship, making no plans for the short or long-term future.

Ojai Worship Group

Ojai Worship Group continues to be a small, steady group of 5 or more worshippers meeting at the home of a long time, now deceased Friend, Val Schorre. Our greatest joys are making tea for one another, getting to know and connect with individuals in the group, welcoming visitors, and having a quiet dependable sanctuary to come together in.

We are older and have experienced the death of one of our cherished Friends this year. We are dealing with health issues. We have had struggles with individual personality conflicts and have experienced a lack of flexibility and generosity with each other that has caused a drop in attendance that causes us sorrow.

There are many things we yearn for: more attenders, especially younger people; more communion with our Santa Barbara Friends Meeting; retention of attenders; and more activities doing things together, either socially, or in more meaningful peace work activities.

There are many ways we put our faith in action, though, not as many as we'd like. We share/or don't share on Facebook, we spend time on personal exploration, the results of which expands to others, we care for family and friends, both in and out of Meeting, we email as political activism, we pray and meditate individually and corporately, on line. Some of us are active on larger Quaker committees, in AVP, and on the Peaceable Kingdom journal.

We found this exercise useful. Thinking about and discussing our desires helped us to plan some activities for the future.

Orange County Meeting

What are your greatest joys as a meeting? We find joy in our communal worship, caring, and action. In supporting one another — in a 16-year book group or in ongoing potlucks or in welcoming newcomers — we recognize our joy. We embraced one family spiritually, emotionally, and financially this year; we quietly embraced an aging member who needed assistance as his aging limited his options. Our Meetings for Worship are frequently “gathered” and the silence nourishing; our anxieties or personal concerns expressed openly. We have welcomed one new member this year and have two more in the process. We can and do support individual leadings.

Are your Business Meetings conducted in worship? Here we could do better and have resolved to do so. We need intermittent reminders not to address one another but rather to address the Clerk. We come to Meeting with open minds but need to remain on topic in large and small ways. We must focus on worshipful participation with, perhaps, more silence buffering our commentaries. Continued reinforcement of proportion, insofar as issues are concerned, would be helpful. We recognize the functionality of our nominating committee filling our rosters effectively and swiftly.

What are troubles or challenges that lie ahead? The “elephant in the room” for us has been our decision to relocate OCFM to a situation that will better meet our needs. After multiple meetings for evaluation, polling the membership’s commitment, and a Talking Meeting, we find most Friends wish to move. A few are uneasy in this uncertain world, yet all pertinent aspects have been covered. The costs will not be simply cash but also personal time, creativity, and labor. Our site-search committee continues its quest for an appropriate venue.

As we consider relocation, we question whether we might do more to attract new seekers, attenders, and (eventually) members. We realize we need families to grow and provide more life for the meeting. And so, we must improve our outreach.

What do you yearn for as a meeting? Primarily, we long for transformation, i.e., families with children; and we want expansion, i.e., our own meetinghouse. We see more youngsters as the lifeblood of this Meeting. We long for the sense that the Meeting will be here even if we ourselves are gone. The question that nags us: Will there be someone to do my Memorial Minute? Our current level of outreach is somewhat scattered, as our members live in various locations. The vital Quaker activities of a few years ago in Southern California are now not there. A challenge to us and others to keep those going. We long for more ways for our Quaker families to meet with others.

How do you put your faith into action? We reach out to the community with the formation of an FCNL Advocacy team, our presence at Irvine’s Global Village and OC Pride Festival, support of a women’s shelter, and letters to editor in large and small newspapers. Our young people raised funds for a water purification project. And we are pleased that this next generation has been helpful in joining in the Meeting’s care for our aging members and attenders. Individual leadings involve immigrant rights, mental health, and animal welfare. News of these activities hearten us, promoting further involvement and dedication.

Orange Grove Meeting

The perceived state of Orange Grove Meeting depends upon the state of each observer. These include members both active or distant, attenders old and new, visitors Friendly or curious, groups sharing our campus as well as those distant such as our worship groups. Our outreach touches lives in our neighborhood as well as on other continents. Here's a brief glimpse of our current condition.

A visiting Friend notes that we are a fortunate Meeting. We agree, and seek ways to continue good stewardship of our resources. We are grateful for our heritage property and make improvements which speak to our values. Our finances are adequate and we invest in the spiritual growth of the Meeting through grant funds to Friends as led and discerned. Well attended workshops are an annual feature. Adult education is responsive to the needs which arise.

Friends perceive an increase in attendance which may result from the interesting times we live in. Our website attracts younger people although our diversity is still lacking. We are actively seeking ways to change that, exploring our motives and means to become a more inclusive community. The numerous children at Meeting are a joy and the committee to educate them has been reinstated. Welcoming events are held for our new babies. A joyful clatter rises from the kitchen as more Friends participate in providing fellowship, something many of us learned visiting Quaker Center. More Friends participate in more ways but the work seems to expand as quickly, and it can be difficult to find Friends to do committee work. Many attend for the silence and a brief respite from the challenges we face outside of Meeting and haven't yet participated beyond that.

One new attender notes that the silence is always good and the ministry sometimes. Another found lengthy ministry off-putting. A perception of unbalanced spiritual and political ministry spoke many Friends' minds who participated in a session seeking input for this report. We know that love is at the heart of our Meeting work, expressed through our lives of peace, justice, and service, and this is evident in our vigorous activism. At times confronting the world on the world's terms seems to conflict with the needs of our spirits. As an example, our efforts to create emergency safety plans with the police raised concerns that our spiritual values will be subordinated to theirs if deadly force is used.

We struggle with these difficulties, yet know that we have the means to find peace and centering. The practice of our principles in the Meeting community strengthens us as we engage with loving firmness those who would create a world distant from the peaceable realm towards which we aspire.

San Diego

San Diego Monthly Meeting is growing. We now have a solid core of active members who care deeply about our Meeting, support our actions on Quaker testimonies in the larger community, and continue to learn about our rich Quaker history and philosophy.

We meet at the San Diego Friends Center, on the campus of the Church of the Brethren. We share our building with the San Diego Peace Resource Center and the Border Project of the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC). Our building benefits from our new (2016) system of solar panels, which serves both to deliver clean power and to reduce global warming by shading the asphalt parking area.

We welcome many guests, some new to the Religious Society of Friends, some from other Meetings, and some seeking spiritual connection.

A joint retreat and other activity encourage an ongoing relationship with the nearby La Jolla Friends Meeting. We met in September for a Silent Retreat at the Questhaven Retreat Center in San Marcos.

In our monthly Quaker educational sessions, we explored essays by two Quaker writers: Pink Dandelion's "*Celebrating the Quaker Way*," and Thomas Kelly's "*A Testament of Devotion*." One member is past president of the local chapter of Veterans for Peace. Two members are involved in promoting Quaker values through political action on the local and state levels. Four members are authors, with publication during the year 2017. Many members are active in the larger Quaker Community of PYM. Several members and attenders worked with the ICWJ, the Interfaith Center for Worker Justice of San Diego. One works on his leading to develop and maintain closer ties between PYM and the *Casa de los Amigos* in Mexico City.

After more than a decade of slowly losing our oldest members, we are pleased that San Diego Monthly Meeting is growing again, gaining new regular attenders who are eager to spread our Quaker values as we work toward our long term goals of a strong community and a cleaner environment, in a peaceful and just society.

Santa Barbara Meeting

Our joys as a meeting spring from the expression and celebration of our spiritual life. Shared passions provide a sense of community and a framework for our activism. Highlights included successful AVP prison workshops; interactions with youth facing difficult situations; a memorable radio interview with volunteers from Truth in Recruitment; the dedication of our Peace, Earth Care and Social Concerns Committee; and participation in our peace vigils and marches. Time spent with the Ojai Worship Group (under our care) and the Conejo Valley Worship Group (in close proximity to us) is particularly cherished. Our 4th Annual Retreat provided an opportunity for Friends to rejuvenate, share leadings, and catch up on one another's lives. Some Friends enjoy gathering once a month to participate in a healing circle or to sing and share music. A Thursday evening reading/study group meets in the home of one of our attenders. When families with small children visit our first-day school, we are especially delighted.

Like the meeting house itself and the sense of community we enjoy, our bimonthly meetings for worship on the occasion of business have been described as a "safe place," one of peace and refuge within a society "under stress." Our clerk skillfully encourages us to "come back to center" when our discussions begin to waver. Calls for silence prove helpful when we disagree or tension arises among Friends. We care deeply about one another and trust the process, so we tend to exhibit extraordinary goodwill and respect for each person's unique contribution.

This past year will stand out in our memories for a long time to come, due to the challenges we and our neighbors faced with the Thomas Fire. Friends, family and acquaintances were displaced from their homes, struggled with a lack of air quality, and worked to support one another and the community as a whole in the midst of this devastation. Subsequent mudslides caused tragic loss of life and extensive property damage. In addition, we suffered a period of separation from friends and family to the south of us in Ventura County when flooding and the flow of debris caused a prolonged freeway closure. As a result of this, we are now partnering with La Casa de Maria, whose contemplative prayer groups now meet in our Meeting House.

Our yearnings as a meeting primarily center around our interpersonal relationships. We feel keenly the absence of families with children to attend our first-day school. A couple of Friends clerking committees sometimes experience a sense of overwhelm and are seeking more support and practical help from the meeting. While we wish for more participation among our attenders, we would also like to discover new ways to have our presence be better known in the larger community. At times, we as individuals crave acceptance, appreciation for our accomplishments, diversity, approval, as well as more time and energy for our social activism.

Happily, when the query, "How do you put your faith into action?" was posed to the meeting, the answer was a resounding, "Very well indeed!" Some Friends focus their attention on issues that concern them personally, while others receive a sense of leadership from the meeting and focus their efforts wherever needed most. Many new activities at our meeting house unite us as a body, and we continue to nurture Friends' work with various outreach ministries such as the Alternatives to Violence Project, Truth in Recruitment, peace vigils, Clergy and Laity United for Economic Justice, Transition House, and the Santa Barbara Clergy Association. Our broader goals derive from our testimonies as Friends, and our relationships with one another and the community support these goals. Friends tend to express the feeling that relationships are key here, and that the spiritual life of our meeting is effectively the background for our whole lives.

Santa Monica Meeting

Life of the Meeting. In 2017 we experienced what seemed like small earthquake tremblors that sometimes foretell the big one. We were inspired and shaken by Ben Pink Dandelion and our concern for issues of living in troubled times. We ask: are we ready to listen? What are we called to witness? What are we called to do? This has helped make us stronger and planted seeds for changes. Meeting is a place of peace, a place to grow during good times and bad. Friends celebrate the silence, the feelings of community and the contemplative dimensions of worship. One Friend said that she felt hopeful to be part of a group seeking love together. Friends felt a yielding to the Light, allowing it to transform us and to be open in coming to unity. One Friend said that the Meeting is a space to ponder the mysteries and to participate in a spiritual community. With joy, we celebrated the wedding of Rachel Fretz and Bob Tajima, held under the care of the Meeting. Another Friend said that she loved watching the kids grow up to be teens and seeing how free and loved they are. During the year, three beloved members of our community died; we celebrated memorial Meetings in memory of Shelley Blank and Diane Manning. A memorial worship for Jim Shuman is planned. These memorials allow us to gather and deepen our beloved community. There is action and direction in Adult Education sessions, particularly the monthly Reading Group and the prospects for the Quakerism 101 sessions. During Fall Fellowship, we heard Ben Dandelion's message that we are called by Faith to be a worshipping community, led by God.

Spiritual Discernment. Friends appreciate the discernment process in Business Meetings and committees. Our Business Meetings are steeped in worship and listening. Friends are thankful for the spirit led, challenging and transparent discernment process to find a new daytime tenant, the Aurelia Foundation, a non-profit organization devoted to developing the individual potential of people with special needs. Led by House Committee we have begun another communal spiritual discernment process about how to enhance our place of worship; we are grateful for the vision and expertise of our architect Friend.

Challenges and Changes. There is much we want to do to live our faith and strengthen our community. One Friend said that she would like to have a committee to visit people who have left the Meeting community. Another Friend recommended that the Meeting form small groups that support each other in spiritual growth. In addition, Friends urged that we explore ways to attract more young people and younger families and to communicate to the wider community. Another Friend said that it's a struggle to get enough new members to sustain committees and social action. We also note the resilience and strength of committees as new members join. We need to address the hard of hearing problems in our worship.

Faith into Action. We are searching for ways to deepen our worship and carry it outside the Meeting into our lives and the wider community. We are concerned about the difficult times in which we live, particularly relating to our government and injustice. Many Friends said that we don't have a strong enough communal identity, especially in connection with peace and social action. We seem to lack a larger vision and direction in our communal efforts to promote peace and social justice, despite a longing for a common purpose and more witness. While some feel this lack of a corporate vision, others are satisfied that many Friends, as individuals, put their Quaker faith into action and are committed to continue in this way. We are continuing to explore the finding of a "common purpose" in the Meeting. The Alice Herman Committee offered grants

to Friends for deepening spiritual practices and understanding. One Friend said that the main thing is to strengthen and deepen our worship and find the spark in others. Friends urged us to be more actively involved in the larger society, to strengthen the Quaker voice and to build a more just and equitable society.

Whitleaf Friends Worship Group

For well over sixty years the Whitleaf silent worship group has held meeting for worship in Whittier, California. Presently the group meets in the Mendenhall building of Whittier College at nine-thirty each first day morning. Whittier College, a school founded by Friends, continues to generously provide facility, equipment as well as security to help in the ongoing conduct of this ministry.

The group, while small in number, continues to thrive as an example of how regular, committed and effective just a few devoted Friends can be. In addition to first day meeting for worship, we practice corporate and individual ministries of support, influence, guidance and service as extensions of our Quaker faith and principles.

Two thousand and seventeen was an eventful year for this group, in many ways:

With our general orientation to literacy and education, we continue to serve the community through volunteer tutoring at local grade schools, as well as reading and education programs, such as those conducted at the local Boys and Girls Club. Group member volunteer tutoring and mentoring extends as far as to university educational coaching and assistance. We are also involved in encouraging reading through the city-wide reading program, Whittier Reads.

This group of Friends hold matters of political concern in high regard. Many of us are extensively involved in the local, regional, national and global conduct of action to bring about peace, nutrition, medical services, housing, and human rights – including specifically matters of racial and women’s rights. The matters of gun control and needs of the homeless continue to be important focal points for our action. Much of what we are able to do is carried out through support for organizations such as: FUM, FCNL, AFSC, ESR, peace coalitions, Habitat for Humanity, Heifer International, the American Bar Association, plus marches and petitions for positive social and political change.

On less positive notes of the year, two of our “family” passed away: Ignacio Marin, husband of Kathy O’Brien Marin, and Jeananne Wright Coop, wife of Lind Coop. Both held strong in long-term fights against debilitating conditions. The Whitleaf “family” of Friends continues to provide emotional and spiritual support for the Marin and Coop families.

We continue to pray for additional members so that the Light might shine more generally and extension of the good this little group can do for humanity might be increased.

Blessings on your corporate and individual acts of ministry.

On behalf of the Whitleaf Worship Group,

Lind W. Coop