

Strawberry Creek State of the Meeting Report - April 2013

There is a strong sense of cohesive community in the group of people who attend Meeting for Worship at Strawberry Creek. Worship has grown deeper in nature and Meeting for Worship is less 'chatty'. One friend returning from a long absence described Strawberry Creek Meeting as a very spiritually based loving family. Another one said that "love is present" at our Meeting. There is also a sense of relief that this year has brought us fewer deaths and other challenging life events among our members and attenders.

Immediately following the close of Meeting for Worship we go back into the silence for a time of holding in the Light any we know who are ill or facing adversity. This is done by speaking the names only, without any details. Our practice of going around the room and saying our own names is also an important way of strengthening our community and including newcomers. We have monthly spiritual learning sessions as well as a monthly worship sharing group before Meeting. We now hold one Meeting retreat a year, in order to place greater attention on our 12th month celebration, which attracted nearly a hundred people this year. These practices are all much appreciated by the community.

As we think about how our lives speak, one Friend shared her father's wisdom, "Let your lifestyle be your prayer." As a meeting, we continue to witness corporately via our Dime-a-Gallon program and quarterly Locavore potlucks. We are guided in this by our Peace, Earthcare, and Social Witness Committee and the Loaves and Fishes Committee. We have two active worship groups, one in Oakland and an informal one in Contra Costa County.

Three affinity groups are thriving: an LGBTQ group, an all-inclusive Twelve Step Group, and a brand new young families group, which is also scheduling potlucks and camping trips. In addition, we have several anchoring and support committees for people with individual leadings.

This year our total membership stands at ninety-seven, and it is common to see at least eighty sit down together for worship on Sundays. We had two new members join us, two request transfers to another meeting, one membership laid down, and currently have 3 more memberships pending. We had two deaths, Maggie Ely and Caroline Duhem. Seven new babies were welcomed in September, 2012, and we have a growing number of young children in our nursery. Some of our teens and pre-teens serve regularly as helpers there, receiving training and participating in a special First Day School program designed for them. All told, we have about twenty in First Day School. Because in recent years our children in First Day School have not routinely come into Meeting for part of the worship time, a new process has begun to have the children join us again for the first fifteen minutes.

We find that the realignment of our committees is going well, and that people feel committee work is a nourishing part of belonging to our community. As one person put it, "We have a 'WE' orientation." Our Meetings for Business usually draw at least 30 members, and our process in them has been loving and fruitful.

Margaret Smith + others

Two challenges have risen as we discerned our current state:

A number of members of the community feel that there could be more attention paid to newcomers on an ongoing basis. A good approach could be to begin this during our regular coffee hour. As one Friend said, we need to ask ourselves, "How well do we meet each other?"

Perhaps the greater challenge we face is finding a permanent site. In many ways our current site has served us well for over ten years and we do not yet have unity on a new site. The idea of purchasing property has not advanced, and there appears to be no unified vision of who we want to be in 50 or even 25 years. We are asking ourselves "What kind of a community are we building, not what kind of a building does our community need?" And as we seek to know the answers we also are discerning what our place is in the wider world.

Charlie Blanchard, clerk
Strawberry Creek Monthly Meeting