

## **State of the Meeting Reports 2020**

### **Claremont Friends Meeting: State of the Meeting 2020**

Discerning the state of our meeting in 2019, we find strengths, concerns, and possibilities. Our spiritual life is blossoming. Meeting for Worship is strong and deep. Another said, "This Meeting has taught me how to grow." After-worship sharing of personal spiritual journeys and monthly Bible study strengthen us. Such sharing, plus interviews in the Meeting newsletter, centering on attenders' life-long passions and spirit-led actions, deepen our community. Our art display committee mounts regular exhibits in the Fellowship Room of art created by meeting attenders, providing another kind of profound sharing.

Considerable time and emotional energy in 2019 were devoted to coping with difficult issues regarding one active attender, who initiated several environmentally helpful projects, both at our meeting and in the broader community. This person's behavior, however, was problematical and differed from our understanding of good Quaker order. Good work was done, but our community was fractured. People were hurt and angry; some stepped away from the meeting. Steadfast clerking of Meeting for Business has helped ease tensions -- although not completely. In deciding to end financial support of a project led by this individual, we tried to avoid recriminations, but the action triggered old wounds and unresolved, underlying issues, which persist.

What we learned is that when people bring forward a strong passion, we need to help them explore their leading through Quaker process and nurture them as individuals, whether or not the leading becomes something that the meeting embraces. We have also come to realize how, as Friends, we need to deal with conflicts when they arise in a clear and supportive manner.

Declining numbers and energy mean finding new ways to do the work of the meeting. Several years ago we reorganized our committee structure, combining committees so we would have fewer "slots" to fill. Now we are readjusting our nominating process. Instead of looking for people for committees, we are seeking the best "fit" for each of our members and attenders -- the place where their gifts will be both nourished and especially helpful.

Our children's meeting is small but solid. Our children feel known and appreciated; but finding teachers from within the meeting is increasingly difficult, and we do not want to put that burden on the parents. Some years ago we began hiring college students to assist the teacher. Now we are looking to hire a teacher as well. We hope that strengthening our children's meeting will attract young families who will, in turn, bring new energy to the meeting.

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Conejo Valley Worship Group  
Under the care of Orange Grove Monthly Meet  
March 2020

We continue to share a strong sense of personal relationships and mutual support among members and attenders, a great joy.

We grow in faith plus have a slightly larger attendance and have welcomed a new faithful member. We still have a challenge with attendance due to people travelling and health concerns. We update the "Meetup" social network in hopes of welcoming new attenders.

Our worship group members continue to attend Orange Grove, Santa Barbara and Central Coast meetings on the First Days we don't meet as CVWG. One member attended Annapolis Meeting while in Maryland. We enjoy being part of Fall Fellowship, Spring Gathering and the Santa Barbara and Orange Grove Retreats.

We hosted a basic AVP workshop and are hosting another in June and look forward to hosting more. One member facilitates AVP in California Mens Colony and community workshops in San Luis Obispo. Several members write to incarcerated individuals. Others are active in Interfaith Groups and support our local Islamic Center. One member is on the board of FCL-Ca. Another is involved in programs to increase Sexual and Human Trafficking awareness & has worked on conservancy issues repopulating mangroves to protect coastlines & wild life habitat, sea turtle rehab hospital and collecting data on the vast amount of plastic and micro plastics polluting our oceans. We continue to bear Quaker Witness to the World through our lives as we are led.

We are blessed. We are part of a community where peace and justice matter, where kindness and compassion are the norm and where diversity is accepted and celebrated. We are led by the Spirit.

Inland Valley Friends Meeting  
State of the Meeting Report: March 2020

On March 1<sup>st</sup>, at the rise of Meeting for Worship, ten members and attenders of Inland Valley Friends Meeting (IVFM) gathered for a worship sharing time, focusing on the queries provided by Southern California Quarterly Meeting.

At the top of Friends' comments was our November 2019 move to a new location, renting rooms from All Saints Episcopal Church. The new site provides us with a stable location, along with ample parking and signage unavailable at our previous site. It further gives us more room for a children's program and is quieter than our previous location. Friends were appreciative of this new environment and believe it will contribute to a nurturing worship with potential for growth.

A second recurring comment from Friends was the resurgence of programming outside our regular worship hour. Over the past six months, we have had several potluck worship sharings at Friends' homes, alternating with Quaker Dialogues at rise of Meeting. New attenders were especially appreciative of the gatherings that have helped them understand Quaker practices better and get to know other Friends more deeply.

A related comment made by several Friends, including newer attenders, was the welcoming atmosphere of our new setting and enhanced programming—in addition to the actions of individual Friends. As a group, we expressed our hope not only to continue, but also to enrich our “intentional” welcoming and outreach practices.

We note that some of these practices are facilitated by the work of the Nominating Committee to engage all members and attenders.

An unexpected side effect of our move was a review and ongoing cataloguing of over 900 publications in our library. We experienced joy and a little surprise at the many resources we have. We hope to establish a library committee to finish cataloguing and to publicize the many books and pamphlets we have rediscovered.

Friends continue to mourn the passing of one of our most active long term members. We noted that at least three of our families are dealing with cancer, and we strive to be compassionate and supportive of their struggles.

As a group, we yearn for many things. We yearn for more avenues of outreach. We yearn for more attenders, particularly from the younger end of the age distribution. And we yearn to continue dedicating ourselves to the momentum we have experienced in the last six months as we seek to walk in the Light of the Spirit.

Additionally, we are now working to meet the many challenges of the coronavirus pandemic.

## La Jolla Monthly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends State of The Society Letter 4/13/20

Meeting for Worship on First Day is held in deep enriching silence, a place of grounding for those in attendance, who number 20 to 40. 10-15 Friends meet midweek bi-monthly in a Friend's home. We have been attentive to those who have had physical ailments and we have support groups that meet regularly to strengthen our spiritual lives. Our average age is 70. We have had six deaths. There are few young people, we encourage their attendance on the First Sunday when we have Birthday Celebrations. Occasionally university graduate students join us in worship and service. Each Spring we join together with San Diego Meeting for an enriching Retreat .

We see the working of the Spirit in our committees even though there are many open slots. Ministry & Oversight Committee meets twice a month for two hours mostly in a Worship Sharing mode. The Spiritual Nurturing & Deepening Committee discontinued their 9 AM gathering because of poor attendance, offering instead stimulating discussions at themed topics during hospitality. Community Committee sponsors gathering and activities to bring us closer to one another. The under sized Property Committee replaced our 35 year-old furnace with a MiniSplit unit that heats and cools. We have had difficulty filling our Children's Religious Ed Committee; Friends generously donate their time when children are present.

Friends are involved in a wide variety of social action activities and Quaker organizations. Several facilitate monthly AVP workshops at three Southern California state prisons. We have been represented in Veterans for Peace for years. Friends have been active with border issues, in advocating for Health Care for All and working with the homeless. An active Native Concerns Ad Hoc. Com. has been educating us, a tribe elder presented at our Retreat. Young and old members have a rich ongoing relationship with the Wukchumni/Yokuts tribe in the Central Valley. Diane Randall FCNL General Secretary, led a well-attended two hour spirited sharing session on advocacy.

There was an incident of intimate partner violence in our Meeting which has greatly challenged us. We have been struggling with how to address the multi-faceted and complicated issues that have ensued. Among other things, we engaged the services of an organization which specializes in abuse issues. Their presentation enlightened us as to the challenges faced by victims of intimate partner violence. Several Friends experienced memories of trauma and neglect

in their own personal histories. This incident continues to move us to find paths toward healing and towards advocacy.

We yearn for a galvanizing cause, project that will engage us and give voice to our Quaker values, as do so many of our personal community services, above mentioned do.

We leave the Meeting property after hospitality refreshed, recharged.

Jack Leshefka, Marge Gianelli, Caroline Cothorn

For La Jolla Monthly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends

## ORANGE COUNTY FRIENDS MEETING STATE OF THE MEETING REPORT 2020

### **What study or practices does your meeting encourage and support to deepen the spiritual vitality of your meeting?**

Our Quaker Explorations (QE) sessions before Meeting for Worship encompass topics such as prayer, meditation, *lectio divina*, and poetry as spiritual practice. Quaker “basics” are also recurring topics, including Meeting for Worship, Meeting for Business, leadings, individual testimonies, Quaker history and Quaker organizations and their work. Members share their own spiritual journeys in our QE sessions and at welcoming parties. A book group meets biweekly to study books by and about Quakers and like-minded figures. Our spiritual life is nurtured through community activities, music, arts and crafts, social service projects (like homeless hygiene kits), reading and discussing the Advices and Queries topic for each month and watching QuakerSpeak videos. Silent communal worship vitalizes us, as do our interactions with non-Quakers outside of Meeting and our work in the larger community.

### **How does your meeting experience the manifestation of God’s love?**

We seek the manifestation of God’s love in the good balance of silence and spoken ministry. Some feel that some spoken ministry is overly long and makes listeners feel they are being preached to and detracts from their experience of peaceful reflection.

God’s love is manifested through the love and care shown to one another in the meeting community. We jump in to help one another with everything from cleaning up after hospitality to providing practical and emotional support to members and attenders who experience major hardships. In the same spirit, we have come together to find our new Meeting site and begin planning our move.

### **What is your meeting doing to become more intentionally welcoming?**

We feel that we welcome newcomers warmly with friendly conversation and enticing refreshments. However, we wish to improve our outreach to communities of color and other marginalized groups. We believe that our new meeting site, with its ample parking and easily accessible location in a more diverse neighborhood, will make us more attractive to outsiders. We are working to make our new meetinghouse inviting and welcoming to the full diversity of our wider community.

### **What do you yearn for as a meeting?**

We yearn for an influx of younger members and better outreach to the community. We want to resume holding meeting retreats and seek greater involvement with the quarter and yearly meetings and to be of greater service to those who need us. We feel that the move to our new quarters will help us to satisfy many of these yearnings. We feel hopeful that since our yearning for a new meeting site was answered this last year that the best is yet to come.

## Orange Grove Monthly Meeting

### State of the meeting report 2020

Faith & Practice advises that this report "... *should be a self-examination by the Meeting and its members ...*" raising the question: which state of whose meeting? Legally the meeting belongs to its members, yet others feel as if this is their meeting as well. In Truth, the Meeting belongs solely to the Spirit which draws us all together: the curious, the seekers, the finders, those who teach our historic practice and those who move it forward with the times. Even those who shelter on our porch or break our windows must feel something of the Spirit which uplifts our worship, faintly or strongly, for or against. Some (F)friends who join us by birth grow up to be Quaker, although we struggle to educate youth without religious dogmatism or sufficient support. Attenders grow convinced whenever their spiritual journeys so move them. (F)friends leave us by death, as many with deep spiritual vitality have since our beginning, or from conflicting worldly concerns, which continues. Those who linger in fellowship with us are offered chances to learn and teach, to give and receive, to support and be buoyed, and to be as active a part of our service work as they are able. (F)friends offer these opportunities from their own spiritual connection and OGM simply provides guardrails which keep us centered. We agonize over our perceived challenges and rejoice in our successes, and could use more parties.

The pure Light of Spirit reflects from (F)friends at OGM as a spectrum of beliefs in a variety of flavors: those of Christian heritage alone span a range from evangelicals to those lapsed from other denominations, including those who have rejected authoritarian childhood programming. Taoism, Judaism, Buddhism, Confucianism, and Islam add to the beauty of our rainbow. Philosophical positions which bypass the need for any mention of God are present. The absence of dogma allows those of any faith or none to comfort and accept one another. SCQM's query "How does your meeting experience the manifestation of God's love?" alienated some of us yet we find agreement that Love is the most important word in this question, and seek to lower the barriers raised by language. Our P&SC committee manifests Love via human conscience, and the Spirit which we experience together manifests the social bonds of Love. We seek to resolve conflicts in a loving manner, and even our landscaping is a manifestation of that process today.

We yearn for a community still more diverse and accommodating, with less judgment and more unconditional love that we might better address the sufferings of one another and the world beyond our current reach. We invite those who encounter us to walk with us together so far as we are able.

## San Diego Monthly Meeting 2020 State of our Meeting

The State of the San Diego Monthly Meeting for the 2019 to 2020 year continues to be one of growth in numbers and therefore activities. This steady increase in newcomers has generated an interest in knowing more about our Quaker history and testimonies. As a result we have grown in depth and breadth.

We have been intentional in growing the Meeting by becoming more welcoming with increased hospitality. We now average around 24 on a Sunday morning, up from an average of 10-12 a year ago. We had four members join us and 1-2 more considering membership. We celebrated this with a new member party. We have an active Hospitality Committee of people eager to greet and make sure people feel welcomed with introductions, support, and a nametag. Along with this our refreshments for the social time have grown in variety and quantity with members contributing. Additionally, a Meeting Member has taken the lead on developing our grounds and the space has a more welcoming appearance. We also have a new Communications Team (or committee) who helps assure the newcomers are added to the email list for follow-up and keeps us all abreast of local activities and news.

To deepen the spiritual vitality of meeting we have continued with the presentation of our monthly spiritual journey talks where a different member shares each month. Informally a team of people have been checking in on each other who are experiencing life challenges. Additionally, an ongoing grief group has started and continues to meet monthly. Three members attended the silent retreat in Oceanside and another three attended PYM. The deepening of our collective understanding of our history and influence locally and globally brings a sense of spiritual dignity.

We have experienced the manifestation of God's love in several ways. In addition to the above mentioned activities of hospitality and caring for one another, we have held a baby shower for one member. We have also had two members renew and deepen our relationship with AFSC with participation in border & immigration issues with the newly reactivated Peace & Action Committee. Additionally, the P&A committee has offered several opportunities for writing postcards to our legislators. We have coordinated with Peace Resource Center and Church of the Brethren on

this year's Peace Camp. We have been supporting two refugees seeking political asylum from Honduras for being gay. Lastly, we have broadened our welcoming spirit to "the other" through the recent Sufi offered here by an attender of Meeting.

Financially, we are sound and have seen an increase in contributions.

As we look forward, we yearn to continue deepening our spiritual vitality by growing the aforementioned activities and strengthening our outreach to the larger community.

## 2020 Santa Monica State of the Meeting Report

What follows are responses to the queries for this report from our members and attenders. We have included disparate opinions so that every voice may be heard.

*What study and practices do your meeting encourage and support to deepen the spiritual vitality of your meeting?*

Adult Education Committee has begun a well-planned, well-attended series on *Our Life is Love* by Marcelle Martin.... Conducting business meeting as a meeting for worship emphasizes our dependence on spiritual guidance.... Explaining the role of committees, what is community, what is vocal ministry, and demystifying Quaker process has been helpful.... Offering grants for Quaker conferences, an annual Meeting pass to Quaker Center, and sojourning fellowships for outreach have enriched us.... Monthly reading group on early Quaker writings deepens the experience of Meeting.... Announcing joys and sorrows at the end of Meeting fosters community.... Introducing children and their activities expands our community to all ages.... Fellowship and celebrating birthdays after Meeting helps us sit in silence with minds and hearts open to each other....<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/03/14/world/europe/italians-find-a-moment-of-joy-in-this-moment-of-anxiety.html?action=click&module=Spotlight&pgtype=Homepage>

*How does your meeting experience the manifestation of God's love?*

People experience God's love through the following: vocal ministry in worship.... outreach by individuals and Pastoral Care Committee in visiting and caring for people who are ill or housebound.... supporting the wider community by collecting for food banks, immigrant camps, and fire relief efforts....at memorial meetings for worship, connecting with each other and the person who is gone.... increasingly valuing simple kindness to others, listening with a generosity of spirit and more depth of soul.... knowing that God is always present, letting go and letting God work through us....when there are individual differences in committee and business meetings, seeking the will of the spirit, not of any one person.

*What is your meeting doing to become more intentionally welcoming?*

A vigorous Welcoming Committee provides nametags and greeters every First Day, and monthly potlucks.... The Alice Herman Fund provides seven categories of grants to support our spiritual journeys.... The library has been cataloged online and reorganized to make it more user-friendly....Nominating committee works to involve newcomers, not just to "fill slots" ....Serving on committees deepens newcomers' feelings of community and service to the Meeting....This year we joined FGC, offered free subscriptions to Quaker journals to newcomers, updated the website and Facebook, and installed a beautiful hardwood floor.

*What do you yearn for as a meeting?*

These yearnings include an increase in social action, e.g. climate change and the work of FCNL and FCL.... improving our kitchen.... attracting "firebrands" like John Woolman.... wanting the meeting to become less political and more spiritual.... "attracting" not "pushing" newcomers....discerning "welcoming" from "involving" newcomers.... more racial diversity without expecting to change others' religious practices....working locally with other people of faith.... addressing issues that keep us from deep worship – e.g., cell phones, preaching .... connecting to those who may resist a "faith," but are hungry for a deeper connection to spirit.... more young adult attenders.... more gathered meetings.

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## **Whitleaf Meeting of Friends Worship Group**

Whittier, California  
Annual State of the Meeting Report  
February 28, 2020

Dear Friends:

For well over sixty years the members of the Whitleaf Meeting and Worship Group have gathered for worship, business and family-building social activities in Whittier, California. We continue to be blessed by Whittier College's ongoing provision of the Mendenhall facility for First Day meetings. In a corporate sense, we are thankful that membership and attendance have remained stable this past year - which allows Whitleaf members a consistency of unified focus on matters of local, regional, national and global importance.

Each week in worship we read selected parts of Pacific Yearly Meeting's Faith and Practice and, at the rise of meeting, discuss practice of our faith as it applies to the tumultuous nature of today's environments. We of Whitleaf strive to be a light in the world demonstrating that Friends live their faith through commitment to, work on, and action through the following testimonies:

- A. Peace: Working for, with, and supporting organizations such as the United Nations, FCL, FCNL, AFSC, FUM, Heifer Project International, World Vision, as well as the American Bar Association and American Medical Association's focus on gun control.
- B. Equality: Working for the rights of those discriminated against, such as immigrants, people of color, children, seniors, women, as well as the rights of those who wish to immigrate to, live and work in the United States.
- C. Community: Working for/with and supporting Meals on Wheels, Habitat for Humanity, Boys and Girls Clubs, Salvation Army, Goodwill, Al-anon, AAUW, pro-literacy book reading groups, multiple public libraries, tutoring of non-English language speakers, grade school children, school boards, and adults wishing to further their higher education.
- D. Integrity: Through personal conduct, as well as the spoken and written word, we call on those around us - neighbors as well as public servants - to be a shining light of integrity and ethics that drives

decision-making and actions. Not just when someone is looking, but operationalized in all aspects of one's life.

- E. Unity: Principally, the matter of seeing that of God in every person, disregarding our differences and working as conciliators for the growing of a humanitarian-based approach to world peace: Starting at home and reaching around the globe.
- F. Simplicity: Maintaining life styles that are responsive to Quaker beliefs and, thereby, allow for the availability of personal resources (time, talent and money) for contribution to important causes.

Blessings on your corporate and individual acts of ministry.

On behalf of the Whitleaf Worship Group,

Lind W. Coop  
Recording Clerk