

CPQM Spring Quarter 2011 – State of the Meeting Reports: Summary

In April and May every year, monthly meetings send annual State of the Meeting reports to the Ministry and Oversight Committees of Quarterly and Yearly Meetings so that all concerned can learn how the Spirit is moving among us.

State of the Meeting reports are prepared in different ways by monthly meetings. Sometimes the M&O committee prepares them, sometimes the clerk brings a draft to the Meeting for Business. Sometimes an *ad hoc* committee reaches a consensus in preparing the report, but other times, the whole meeting is surveyed and contradictory opinions are expressed. Sometimes a meeting looks back at their prior year report to gauge changes and progress.

Not counting the Hawaii meetings, College Park has twenty eight monthly meetings and worship groups. This summary is culled from reports covering twelve meetings (and the four related worship groups) received as of May 12, 2011.

Meetings come in many sizes. Strawberry Creek has about 80 worshipers each Sunday, whereas some meetings and worship groups have as few as 4-5, who meet only on alternate Sundays. Berkeley has well-attended Meetings for Worship at 9 and 11. An approximate count finds that twelve meetings own a Meetinghouse, three or four meet in homes, and the rest rent space. Three meetings very happily share space and programs with a Methodist congregation

Friends in all the meetings we've heard from so far report a solid grounding in communal worship. Many meetings have an annual retreat in a local home, or at a specialized place like Ben Lomond Quaker Center. Many speak of book or Bible study groups, a monthly lunch or potluck, Friendly Eights, and generous mutual care for those with significant health issues. Two meetings mentioned the effectiveness of keeping study groups or worship sharing programs limited to 6-8 weeks. At least three meetings have an occasional gathering for games, crafts, music or drama.

The Alternatives to Violence Project (AVP) and other prison projects are getting focused attention in several meetings, as are earth-care initiatives. Several meetings offer support of various kinds for homeless people, in one case assisting with the annual Stand Down event run by the VA. Two or three meetings mentioned war taxes as a concern. Several meetings are involved in weekly vigils. Many peace and justice topics are offered for second hour consideration at some meetings; others focus down on just three or four.

Mostly First Day School programs are small, but three or four are large enough to pay for a teacher's aide or child care. Sacramento mentioned "using a well-developed curriculum on Quaker values and testimonies." Two or three meetings spoke of vibrant teen programs, but some feel that "teen programs take more commitment than we can offer." We heard of a women's fellowship group more than once, and San Francisco held a popular women's retreat at Sierra Friends Center.

People who lack a basic sense of trust towards Quakers are a challenge in several meetings. Interpersonal struggles among members occasionally emerge, and some