

Ad-hoc Regional Gathering Committee Report to CPQM, Spring Quarter 2019

Three regional gatherings have been held since we met for Winter Quarter sessions in January.

According to Robin Severns of Palo Alto Meeting and Alan Edgar of Santa Cruz Meeting, a **South Bay Regional Gathering** drew 52 Friends, about half from Palo Alto and half from Santa Cruz with a few attenders from Live Oak and San Jose Meetings. The gathering was held over the last weekend in March at Ben Lomond Quaker Center. Two children attended and enjoyed their time with Mark Runyan. Some Friends came for two overnights, some for one and some just for the day on Saturday. It was a relaxed, fairly unstructured weekend featuring get-acquainted games, worship groups, interest groups, a film on Midwestern Quaker history, singing, games and worship. Food was organized by three people and prepared by chore groups. Financial aid was offered to those who requested and fees exceeded expenses leaving enough to place a deposit for their planned joint meeting retreat next year. "Everyone enjoyed the opportunity to get to know Friends from another Meeting." "The joint retreat was a delight." "It had some intimacy, it allowed me to get a little sense of the character of [the Santa Cruz] community."

From Janet Leslie of Chico Friends Meeting we learned about the **Valley-Sierra Regional Gathering** that took place at Chico Friends Meeting on Saturday April 13, with a theme of "Strengthening Our Quaker Connections." This gathering drew a total of 51 Friends, about half from Chico and half from nearby meetings and worship groups (Davis, Sacramento, Grass Valley, Lake County, Redding, and Reno/Carson City). Three children attended and explored the theme of Kindness with Chico Friends in the morning and played with Chico State students in the afternoon. Expenses for lunch and childcare were covered by contributions. A committee of four Friends from Chico planned the gathering over the course of two months, managing communications, program details, food, logistics, childcare and overnight hospitality for those who requested. The program included community building activities, an interactive session reflecting on life in a Meeting, and worship sharing. Evaluations repeatedly affirmed doing more of these gatherings, strengthening our connections and learning from each other. Details of the program, including activities and queries will soon be available at the CPQM website.

From Mico Sorrel we learned about the **North Bay-North Coast Regional Gathering** that took place April 6-7 at Chinmaya Mission West retreat center near Garberville. The gathering drew 34 people, 12 from Redwood Forest/Friends House and 12 from Humboldt Friends Meeting. The remaining ten came from Lake County WG, Ukiah WG and Mendocino Friends Meeting. Two children attended and were well cared for by a young woman who had done previous childcare for RFFM. The theme of the gathering was "Life Transitions" drawing Friends to consider how we grow spiritually as we encounter myriad transitions in our lives: childhood to adulthood, committed relationship, Meeting membership, birthing, death of loved ones, our own diminishments. Costs were modest at \$45 and food was a combination of potluck and provided by Humboldt friends. Program included introductions, worship, worship-sharing, singing and focused sharing using poetry and quotes on life transitions. The gathering drew a significant number of Friends who had rarely or never attended a Quaker gathering beyond their own worshipping community. Evaluations supported continuing this kind of gathering, coming back to the same site again and eight people stepped forward to plan next year's gathering. Details of the program, including quotes and queries will soon be available at the CPQM website.

The ad-hoc committee was heartened by the success of these three gatherings and the desire on the part of both those who attended and those who did not to continue holding regional gatherings. It is also clear they serve a need for some Friends who are not being served by our current Spring/Fall/Winter CPQM schedule.

We had hoped that a regional gathering might also have taken place in the East Bay/San Francisco region but this did not happen. We wonder whether these Meetings, being some of the largest in the Quarter and in a large population center, are less “hungry” for the kind of opportunity a regional gathering offers. We were also aware that another possible region that might benefit from gatherings in the future would include Visalia, Central Coast and Fresno.

One of the tasks of the ad-hoc committee has been to promote regional gatherings. We have done so and those that have taken place have been well received, clearly satisfying a need CPQM Friends feel. Momentum is present that leaves us confident that the three regional gatherings that took place this spring will take place again next spring. We hope that additional groups will meet and perhaps use the resources available soon on the CPQM website to plan gatherings.

Another task of the committee was to consider the possibility of laying down the Winter Quarter single day session in favor of Regional Gatherings. We do not recommend replacing Winter Quarter with regional gatherings. Winter Quarter is a good opportunity for speakers and it draws a large number of Bay Area Friends.

We want to increase participation in Winter Quarter. About a third of those attending the North Bay-North Coast gathering said, in their evaluations, that they would like to participate in some portion of Winter Quarter session through Zoom, perhaps as part of a Meeting group. We need to do more to promote this possibility.

We want to promote more opportunities for regional gatherings. Though other times may be possible, all regional gatherings met this year in March or April and wish to meet in that same time frame again next year. Neither the Valley-Sierra region nor the North Bay-North Coast region wish to try meeting in January or February; travel is much too challenging.

Over time, we see it as appropriate to transition this project from an ad hoc committee to a continuing part of CPQM core work, perhaps as a subcommittee of M&O. It feels important to us to continue as an ad hoc committee for a bit longer to ensure that this new growth is fully rooted in the Quarterly Meeting. We will ensure that reports and other planning documents are available on the CPQM website. We will explore additional possibilities for regional gatherings, specifically Visalia/Fresno/Central Coast and seek input about whether such a gathering is desirable for East Bay/SF Friends. We will persist in making remote participation possible and desirable for Friends who, for whatever reason, will not be joining CPQM sessions in person.

We will follow-up on these tasks and report again at Fall Quarterly Meeting.

Mico Sorrel, clerk on behalf of Ad-hoc Committee on Regional Gatherings: Jim Anderson, Janet Leslie, Dinah Bachrach, Liz Baker, Kathy Runyan, Tom Yamaguchi, Eric Sableman, Barbara Babin (ex-officio)