

## **NORTHBAY – NORTHCOAST REGIONAL GATHERING**

Thirty-four people attended the Northbay - Northcoast regional gathering held at Krishnalaya (Chinmaya Mission West Hindu Retreat Center) in Piercy CA April 6-7, 2019. Attendees included 12 each from Humboldt and RFFM/Friends House, four from Lake County WG (incl. 2 children), five from Ukiah WG and one from Mendocino. Appleseed and Napa were invited but were not interested in attending.

The gathering necessitated travel ranging from 1.5 to 2.5 hours and people were very good about carpooling. Of the four meals needed, two were provided by attendees as potluck offerings, one was a bring-your-own sack lunch and snacks and one breakfast were provided by a small food committee. Most of the planning and arranging for program and childcare was done by Mico Sorrel and Dinah Bachrach of RFFM. Jan Turner, Humboldt Meeting participated in program preparation and arranged for the site. Humboldt Friends organized food.

We chose a theme of Life Transitions, prepared one general session that featured quotes and poems on the topic and a chance to write and share in small groups. We had two scheduled worship times, two worship sharing times, a chunk of free time with many people hiking at nearby Richardson's Grove and an evening sing-along. It was a very rich time for all who came with MUCH enthusiasm expressed for gatherings like this one in the future. Eight people offered to be involved in one way or another in planning a future gathering. Almost everyone completed an evaluation on-site that revealed the following:

About a third are now or have been involved to some degree in the wider circle of Friends (attendance at Pacific Yearly Meeting, College Park Quarterly Meeting, Ben Lomond Quaker Center programs ETC). About half expressed interest in "participating," maybe listening in, via Zoom or other technology on some portion of a College Park Quarterly Meeting program, some would prefer to do this as part of a Meeting group.

Most people expressed a preference for a two day regional gathering over a single day and most people said they were willing to drive about 2 or 2.5 hours one way to attend such a gathering. A March or April gathering was MUCH more popular than a January gathering date, in part due to the frequent closures of 101 due to winter slides. Some would come just for the sheer joy of fellowship, one expressing a desire for far less structure and more expectant waiting worship with other Friends, one wishing for the addition of a silent space where attenders could read/write/worship, and one hoping for spontaneous interest groups.

Most preferred a theme. Themes proposed included Social Activism, Quakers and Theology, any of the Q Testimonies, Spirituality and Tolerance, Being Useful, Study of well-known Quakers or Pendle Hill Pamphlet etc, Racial Injustice, Immigrants, Quaker Promotion, Building Community.

Site and low cost (\$45/person) and food were appreciated by ALL and distance was not cited as a problem but correct directions to the site was. Many people said they'd like to come back to the same site again. Money collected actually exceeded expenses by enough to offer scholarships to four people who found fees to be a financial hardship. This might suggest a "pay-as-led" fee program in the future. Two participants recommended a general logistics/site orientation meeting for all attenders and one recommended a lead person on each volunteer crew. People appreciated getting to know Friends from other Meetings *and* more deeply those from their own meetings.

Below are flyer, schedule and program materials and evaluation form completed on-site by attenders.

*Mico Sorrel, Redwood Forest Friends Meeting, member of Ad-hoc Regional Gathering Committee of CPQM*

COME ONE, COME ALL!

**North Bay/North Coast Regional Gathering** April 6-7,  
2019 Chinmaya Mission West Retreat Center Piercy, California

How do we grow spiritually as we encounter myriad transitions in our lives? Our weekend together will be an opportunity to reflect on these experiences. We will use poetry, prose and queries that speak to these passages: from childhood to adulthood, into a career, commitment in relationship, birthing, empty nest, Meeting membership, the losses of aging, death of loved ones, diminishments and death. Do these passages intersect? Inform each other? Our exploration as a group may foster a new way of knowing one another.

Join Friends from Sonoma, Napa, Lake, Humboldt and Mendocino counties to explore the theme of Life Transitions April 6-7 at Chinmaya Mission West Retreat Center in Piercy. It will be a rich time of spiritually nurturing program activities, good people and food, all at low cost. Preregistration needed by APRIL 1. Children welcome.

Contact **Mico Sorrel** at [margaretsorrel@gmail.com](mailto:margaretsorrel@gmail.com) and further information will come your way.



## **North Bay/North Coast Regional Gathering, April 6-7, 2019**

Chinmaya Mission West Retreat Center, Piercy CA

### **LIFE TRANSITIONS**

How do we grow spiritually as we encounter myriad transitions in our lives? Our weekend will be an opportunity to reflect on these experiences. We will use poetry, prose and queries that speak to these passages: from childhood to adulthood, into a career, commitment in relationship, birthing, empty nest, Meeting membership, the losses of aging, death of loved ones, diminishment and death. Do these passages intersect? Inform each other? Our exploration as a group may foster a new way of knowing one another.

### **Schedule**

#### **Saturday April 6**

9:30-10:00 AM Arrive, Snacks and Tea and Coffee available

10:00 -11:00 AM Opening Session. Introductions

11:15- 12:15 Worship

12-15 - 1:15 PM Sack Lunch

1:15- 3:45 PM Free time, Hikes at Richardson Grove

4:00 - 5:30 PM Program: Poetry, Prose, Focused Sharing

6:00- 7:30 PM Potluck Dinner and Clean-up

7:30 - 8:30 PM Worship-Sharing

8:30- 10:00 PM Singing (bring instruments and Rise up Singing books)

#### **Sunday April 7**

8:00 AM Breakfast: Vegetables and Tofu, Oatmeal

9:30 - 10:45 AM Worship Sharing

11:00 AM -12:00 PM Worship

12:00 PM Potluck Lunch, Clean up and Farewell

### **WORSHIP-SHARING GROUP QUERIES**

Saturday: Share a significant life transition you have experienced. Did you mark it with any kind of ritual? What was helpful/not helpful in completing that passage? Are there rituals from your own ethnic or family history or Quaker culture that help mark life transitions for you?

Sunday: What is the life transition you are in right now? What life transition is on the horizon for you? How are you navigating the emotional landscape of that transition? What can you imagine would be helpful in marking it, something that would help move you further along, completing the passage? How might you gather F/friends or family around you as you move through the transition?

## QUOTES ON LIFE TRANSITIONS (poems distributed and read, not copied here)

*From: Pierre Ceresole's letter of application for membership in London Y.M. 1936* I feel very strongly, on the other hand, that the spiritual life absolutely requires that we should not remain isolated. It is this deep need of getting out of a prolonged and dangerous relative isolation which urges me to ask now to be admitted among the Quakers. It is more and more clear to me that it is only in the bosom of a religious family, freely but strongly constituted, that the individual can render to the world the services it sorely needs and which no politics, not based on deep inspiration, can hope to organize

*John Yungblut, 1990* It is natural to struggle against diminishments, like Jacob wrestling with the angel. It is well to see that, in doing so, one is struggling against an angel and not to let go until one has received the distinctive blessing of that particular angel. Even if one goes away limping badly, the diminishment will have been hallowed by this blessing.

*An NPYM Friend 2012* If someone had just sat with me to hold my separating marriage in the Light for 15 minutes, it would have made all the difference in the world to me.

*Journal of Job Scott 1751-1793* I have seen much advantage to children, and indeed to whole families, from the practice of a solemn pause at meals. It learns children stillness, decency, and reverence; and where it is done in a feeling manner, with minds rightly turned to feel after God, and experience God's blessing, and is not practiced in a slight formal manner, it tends to season and solemnize the minds of young and old ... I am morally certain, that I have many a day gone through the cares and concerns of life, with much more composure, stability, satisfaction and propriety, for the strength and assistance I have found in drawing near to God in solemn silence in my family, and I wish the practice of reverently adoring God in this way, may increase more and more.

*Damaris Parker-Rhodes 1985* Finally and painfully I came to the conclusion that in a family we are one another's destiny both for good and ill. We too had parents and they had parents - and parenting is chancy. Try as hard as one can, still one makes nearly fatal mistakes

*Lisa Lofland Gould, 1999* If you think about it, there are no boundaries between one organism and another, between "life" and "non-life." We are constantly flowing from one to another. One moment a skin cell is a portion of a human being, the next moment it is part of a dust pile, then it is transformed into a house plant or a rhododendron bush; then it becomes oxygen to be breathed in by a possum, whose wastes feed bacteria that bring nutrients to an oak tree, which feeds a gypsy moth. All through the food web and nonliving world we travel, zillions of fragments are forever being put together and taken apart to make yet more unique creations. Physically we possess no true boundaries; we are forever remolded and recast into new forms. Francis Hole, a soil scientist and poet (and Friend), has said, "Our bodies are disposable, biodegradable containers for spirit." We are worms and granite, oak trees and robins, sea spume and mica; we are stardust . . . we are each as old as the universe.

*Plain Living: A Quaker Path to Simplicity, Catherine Whitmire*

*Christian Faith and Practice in the Experience of the Society of Friends, Britain Y.M.*

*North Pacific Yearly Meeting Discipline 2018*

## EVALUATION Form (completed on site)

College Park Quarterly Meeting has been considering the possibility of laying down the Winter session (a single day gathering held in January in San Francisco, Palo Alto, Berkeley, or Santa Rosa) in favor of regional gatherings that might prompt a wider group of Friends over our large geographic area to participate. This gathering represents an experiment to test the viability of that proposal. Other regional gatherings have been a single day held at a Meeting House or multi day held at a retreat center. This gathering brought Friends from Mendocino, Humboldt and Redwood Forest Meetings and their associated Worship Groups – Southern Humboldt, Ukiah, Lake County and Friends House. Appleseed and Napa Meetings were invited but did not participate.

Are you a regular attendee at CPQM sessions either Winter (various locations) or Spring (Ben Lomond Quaker Center in May) or Fall (Sierra Friends Center in October)?

If distance has been a deterrent for you, would you consider participating in some parts of CPQM sessions “remotely” through the new technology possibilities offered by Zoom or other platforms?

Are you a frequent, infrequent or rare attendee at Quaker gatherings outside your home Meeting? (Pacific Yearly Meeting, College Park Quarterly Meeting, Ben Lomond Quaker Center programs etc)?

If CPQM were to continue regional gatherings, how far would you be willing to travel, *one way*, (1, 2, 3 hours) for a single day gathering?

Would you prefer a two-day gathering, like this one and how far would you travel, *one way*, for such an opportunity?

Would you make the trip for a regional gathering held in January?

Would you make the trip for a regional gathering held in March or April?

Is it important to have a theme and program? If so, what themes/topics would draw you?

Would getting together for the sheer joy of fellowship with other Friends draw you to attend?

Most sites would be more expensive than this one. How much would you be able/willing to pay for a two-day gathering such as this one?

Would you be a part of a planning committee for a future gathering? If yes, please note your name/contact information.

Any specific feedback you would like to offer about this gathering is welcome: Site, Food, Theme, Facilitation of program, Fees, Registration, Communication. . .

Any comments you have on questions not asked here is also welcome (more space on other side).