

**State of the Meeting Report**  
**Redwood Forest Friends Meeting**  
**2020-2021**  
*approved May 9, 2021*

Although it has been an extraordinarily challenging year, we are grateful that we have found ways to gather in worship and that worship remains at our center. As the pandemic closed down our in-person Meetings for Worship, Redwood Forest Friends Meeting quickly opened a Zoom account for weekly worship. The attendance in our virtual Meetings for Worship has been consistent, with about the same number present as when we were meeting in person. Although we have gained some returnees and some new attenders during this period, there are several who have been unable to attend on Zoom. An outdoor Meeting for Worship currently takes place on Wednesday mornings, attended by a handful of worshippers. In addition, a small Experiment with Light group meets in person twice a month.

**Spiritual Activity** A core group of Friends attends Meeting for Worship nearly every Sunday. Although for many virtual worship does not feel the same as meeting in person, there are times when the presence of Spirit is strong and ministry is robust. We have not been able to maintain religious education programs for adults or children, but are looking forward to resuming these programs. Several Friends are exploring how we might open the Meetinghouse to worship and whether and how hybrid Meetings might be conducted. We hope that our new attenders might find a spiritual home among us.

**Meeting Community** Our Meeting community remains loosely stitched together in spite of flagging energy, pandemic malaise, and the restrictions on gathering in person. We grieve three deaths as well as the long-term illnesses that plague a few of our members. We celebrate the fact that we have gained two new members, that we are welcoming new attenders, and that there is a new baby in our midst and another is expected to arrive in September.

**Sabbatical Year and Upcoming Experiment** For several years our Nominating Committee has struggled to find people called to serve the available positions. This situation reached a more critical point early last year when the Nominating Committee itself was both without a clerk and too small to function. Our Worship and Ministry and Oversight Committees were similarly flagging in energy. Clearly we needed to reassess. What is truly needed to nurture us as a spiritual community? We researched what other Meetings have done to pare down their structures and held several threshing meetings. And in July 2020 we minuted our decision to take a six-month sabbatical from committee work. Only essential activities, such as care of our property and finances and zoom meetings for worship took place.

In January of this year we began to hold Meeting for Business and through additional discernment and threshing meetings, including an on-line survey related to the health of the Meeting, an experimental structure has been approved to see us through April of next year. The coordinating group that served to respond to concerns that arose during our Sabbatical time will continue to serve this role as well as cover the functions usually addressed by Worship and Ministry and Oversight Committees. Individual Friends are welcome to organize Interest Groups or Working Groups to perform tasks or share interests as they are led. We hope this coming year, with its opportunity to *be* Quakers rather than *doing* tasks, will breathe new life into our individual and corporate lives.

**Work on Racism** There has been life in the Meeting's work led by our Quaker Working Group on Racism. During the sabbatical period this group led discussions twice a month, exploring racism and white supremacy through discussions of several books, documentaries, and films. The group currently

meets monthly, and is facilitating conversations on how to become a more welcoming and actively anti-racist Spiritual community, looking at our own attitudes and practices and considering how we can be staunch allies for justice. At a recent session on College Park Quarterly Meeting's queries on inclusion and racism, several participants spoke to the Meeting's need to be more open and welcoming to all newcomers, including reviewing our use of jargon, what is displayed on our walls, and the materials in our library. We expect to engage in much more discernment about anti-racism: continuing our ongoing learning as individuals, examining our Meeting's structures and practices, and exploring how our Meeting is led to be an anti-racism presence in the community. One of our members is leading a monthly session entitled "Preparations of the Repair of Social Justice," in which we are considering the role of Quakers in reparations.

**Witness** Members of the meeting remain active in the North Bay Organizing Project, Alternatives to Violence Project, Guatemala Scholarships, and Wal'jok! Foundation in Bolivia. Although these activities are somewhat limited by our inability to gather in person, this work remains vital to our witness in our local community and internationally.

**Finances and Property** Although our income is substantially lower than it has been in previous years, many of our expenses are lower as well. With careful re-budgeting by the Finance Committee, we are meeting our obligations, including our stewardship budget. Our property is cared for by our Resident Friends, who work with members of the Property Committee to oversee the Safe Parking Program, which allows unsheltered persons to spend the night safely in their cars in our parking lot.

**Resilience in the Face of Climate Change** Although several members evacuated their homes because of the devastating fires of the past two years, our Meetinghouse and the homes of all in our Meeting community survived. We are thankful that there was no injury or loss of property among our members and attenders. However, the Monan's Rill community, which was founded by some of the same beloved individuals who were instrumental in forming Redwood Forest Friends Meeting, suffered severely in the 2020 Glass fire. They are doing a beautiful job in the recovery of their land and their spirits. We are reassured that Friends House's response was excellent and that the 2020 evacuation went smoothly. As we head into another year of drought and prepare ourselves for another fire season, we are very aware of climate change and the need to strengthen our Quaker witness to care for one another and our earth.

### **Worship Groups Under Our Care**

**Lake County Worship Group** meets weekly on Zoom with 6 to 10 attenders. Some attendees come from other Meetings such as Humboldt, Apple Seed, Las Vegas, Nev. and Honduras as well as Lake, Mendocino and Sonoma Counties. Recently, singing before Worship has been added. Besides messages which arise out of the Silence, afterthoughts provide deep meaning and insights for the attenders!

**Ukiah Worship Group** *is working on their report.*

### **State of the Meeting Report, April 2021, from Friends House Worship Group**

Where we used to have two dozen, there were only eight or nine present when we started to brainstorm about the State of our Worship Group at Friends House on April 25. Someone called out, "Praise the Lord, the great storm is over!" Well, almost.

The Covid pandemic certainly affected the physical participation of many of our group. Even now we are not allowed to have off-campus participants. However, people have worshiped alone or in twos or threes, at home, on a communal patio, and, in this last month, once again inside the Library. Some of us have joined Redwood Forest worshippers by Zoom. Always the spirit of the Meeting was felt to be alive and important to many of us.

We do not have much vocal ministry and would appreciate more but realize that authenticity is more important than spoken words. Sometimes after-thoughts are expressed which are nourishing. We share our fervent fears and prayers for our world. We approach one another “with a humble heart.” Being “held in the Light” can convey real strength and hope to a suffering person.

Our Worship Group is attended by a number of FH residents who are not Quakers, but who are nourished by the respite from busyness offered by our silent gathering each Sunday. We welcome their presence. In the past two years, three of our residents became new members of the Religious Society of Friends. Two of them are in their nineties, gratified finally and formally to be counted among us.