

The State of the Meeting report

College Park Quarterly Meeting
11th Month, 2016

The State of the Meeting (SoM) Report

What is it?

Why do we do it?

How do we do it?

When do we do it?

What do we do with it?



What is it?

“a self-examination by the Meeting and its members of their spiritual strengths and weaknesses and of efforts to foster growth in the spiritual life”



NOT primarily a report of:

- Activities during the year
- Changes like births and deaths
- Growth or shrinkage of membership

Though these may be part of it



What is it?

The SoM report is a public document that speaks the truth about your Meeting.

It tells the Quaker community and the world who you are and where you stand on your collective spiritual journey.

As such, it is like the epistles written by larger Friends' gatherings addressed "to Friends everywhere."



A little history of epistles

"The Epistle from the Elders at Balby" (1656).

This early, famous letter consists of 20 guidelines on how Friends should live both individually and as a body.

The elders and brethren send unto the brethren in the north these necessary things following; to which, if in the Light you wait, to be kept in obedience, you shall do well. Fare well.

1. That the particular meetings by all the children of Light, be duly kept and observed, where they be already settled, every first-day of the week; except they be moved to other places. And that general meetings be kept in order and sweet in the Life of God, on some other day of the week than on the First-day, unless there be a moving to the contrary: that so in the Light and Life, the meetings may be kept, to the praise of God.

Patriotism and Paradox: Quaker Military Service in the American Civil War



At Birmingham (Pennsylvania) Meeting, the only mention made of members who violated Quaker peace testimony appeared muted.

"Friends mostly maintain our testimony against oaths, an hireling ministry and the other particulars of the query except bearing arms, training and other military services, which testimony some of our members have violated, but who have not yet been treated with."

Birmingham Monthly Meeting Minutes of April 25, 1862

Six members of Birmingham Meeting arose to the call and joined the Pennsylvania Volunteer Militia. ...Partly because of Quaker aversion to controversy, accurate records of individual Friends' status on this issue do not exist.

- historian Mark A. Schmidt

1862 Baltimore Yearly Meeting From “Answers to the Queries”

“...Our religious meetings in that section of the country have generally been maintained, though most of our meeting-houses have, at times, been occupied for military purposes. At Hopewell and Winchester, our members have been subjected to peculiar privations and trials, by reason of the large contending armies that have alternately occupied and despoiled that region; but the Meetings of Friends have seldom been omitted, though often held in private houses.”



Epistle of Genesee Yearly Meeting, 1865



Dear Friends,
... While we have mourned that the spirit of war should have made its inroads among us, a peace-professing people, while we have sorrowed that some of our young men should have, under the influence of the excitement around them, been induced to enter the arena of military strife, and there become the instruments of shedding the blood of their fellow men; yet we earnestly hope now, as the conflict has ceased, and as they return to their peaceful homes, they may become so convinced of the superiority of the principle of love to that of force ...



Why do we do it?
When do we do it?

Friends Meetings annually conduct a self-examination:

“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.”

PYM M&O letter requesting SoM reports



January 16, 2003

Dear Meeting Clerks,

Your PYM M&O committee is preparing for our next Yearly Meeting. We are looking forward to reading the State of the Meeting reports to gain valuable insights regarding our Monthly Meetings, both individually and collectively. We suggest that your Meetings use pg. 218 in our current Faith and Practice as a guide, and that the preparations themselves be held as experiences in spiritual growth. ...

May 1, 2003 is the latest date for your reports to be in the hands of the Clerks of PYM and CPQM M&O Committees.

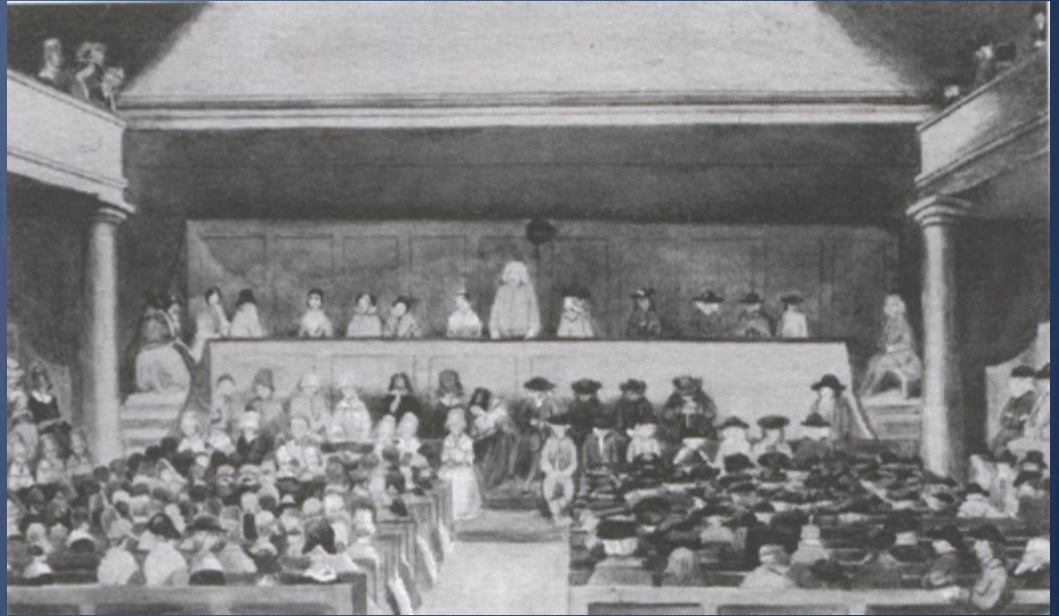
Copies by email are preferred.

What goes into a SoM report?



- Births, transfers, new members and deaths are reported often (but also should go to the PYM Statistical Clerk).
- Clearness and support committees are active in most meetings
- “Many Friends are involved in quarterly and yearly meeting work, in our corporations, the AFSC and other Friends organizations – there is much demand on our time.”

The basics



- The commonality that makes Quaker meetings everywhere similar is the committed search for truth, for peace, for loving community.
- Appreciation for meeting for worship.
- There is a desire for better familiarity with the testimonies, and for deeper growth of the Spirit.

Speak of your challenges

- Our aging demographic is of concern to many, along with the related manpower shortages.
- People who lack a basic sense of trust towards Quakers are a challenge in several meetings.
- Interpersonal struggles among members occasionally emerge.
- “Do we take each other for granted?”
- Do we adequately support and trust our committees?
- Struggling with financial stresses
- Cutting back on giving to worthy organizations



Ideas other meetings could emulate

- San Francisco has Quaker posters in their sidewalk windows and an information booth at the annual Gay Pride festival.
- Redding Meeting holds an annual open house called “Meet the Quakers.”
- Redding is working on formally becoming a “confirming church” for lesbian, bisexual, gay, transgender and questioning people.
- Redwood Forest runs a summer Peace Camp as outreach for community children and their families.
- Berkeley is completing an oral history project of interviews with long-time Friends. (Davis has done this, too, and perhaps others.)
- Teens in Berkeley wrote and performed a series of mini-plays about Quaker heroes.



- Central Coast youth attended the meeting retreat and PYM, and sponsored a “chatbox” session to discuss core beliefs.
- To deepen the sense of worship, “a minister among us” is invited to speak of his or her gifts and callings at each meeting for business in San Francisco.



Queries and guidance from PYM M&O

We are especially seeking word of your Meetings' spiritual strengths and weaknesses, and of efforts to foster spiritual growth in both corporate and individual lives.

A few weighty elders have offered these queries to help guide this process:

- In what ways has the meeting nurtured the spiritual development of its members and attenders?
- How have you used the Advices and Queries of PYM's *Faith and Practice*?
- How is attention being paid to the spiritual development of the children and youth in the meeting?

Separate SoM sections on spiritual and worldly status

Visalia Friends Meeting
ANNUAL CHRONICLE OF EVENTS
May 2004-April 2005



Last spring our Meeting minuted a decision that our M&O Committee would prepare an annual State of the Meeting Report with emphasis upon the spiritual condition of the Meeting, and in addition, a chronology of Meeting events.

... In early **October**, we held a second annual on-site retreat from a Friday evening to Sunday afternoon. The theme was *Finding John Woolman in a Wal-mart World: Walking The Spiritual Path in a Materialistic Culture*. Woolman's writings served as a focal point, with Wal-Mart advertising acting as counterpoint.

A musical relief was provided by our own Soggy Bottom Boys folk music band. ...

And so we remain content in the Blessings of the Light as we perceive it.



How do we do it?



Various ways to start the process

- Worship & Ministry and Oversight Committees may meet together
- Worship & Ministry /Oversight asks one or more of its members to draft a preliminary report for searching consideration by the Meeting
- The clerk adds it to business meeting agenda in December.
- It is in the associate clerk's job description.
- Ministry & Counsel (or Oversight) has it in its charter.
- The same person does it every year (better to share the job).

How NOT to do it:

Forget to start until
March or April



Information Gathering

- Worship and Ministry and Oversight Committees may jointly explore the spiritual condition of the Meeting.
- Formulate a series of queries for a response from the Meeting
 - Post the queries for anyone to comment on
 - Give queries to committees for consideration at their meetings
 - Consider queries at business meeting in January – February
- Ask Young Friends, teens and children for their input





Seasoning

- If first draft is by one person, hand over for revision by others.
- Read and/or post previous years' SoM reports for comparison.
- Call a special Meeting to discuss draft in worship/sharing format.
- Has anything been left out?
 - It is easier to report on the physical than the spiritual.
 - Has something particularly painful been tacitly omitted?
- Has too much been put in?
 - Is there repetition?
 - There is no page limit, but brevity is valued.

Coming to unity on a final draft

- First reading in business meeting in March or April
- If major revisions are required, circulate new version within 2 weeks
- Minor revisions may come from the floor, but clerk may ask that multiple suggestions be held until later.
- Second reading in business meeting in April or May
- If approval is not forthcoming in May, a called meeting is needed.
- Quarterly Meeting is the 3rd weekend in May, and SoM reports should reach Quarterly M&O at least one week in advance.



Examples from CPQM SoM Reports



- Small Monthly Meeting
- Large Monthly Meeting
- Preparative Meeting & Worship Group *

* Not required to send a SoM Report to Quarterly or Yearly Meeting. Most often sent to the sponsoring Monthly Meeting, which may incorporate parts into its SoM Report

SoM Report by a Small Meeting

“We currently support eight members, five of whom attend on a regular basis. No one under the age of 50 is currently attending with any regularity. A typical Meeting for Worship numbers five to ten people. ... With the welcome transfer of membership of two more seasoned Friends and the addition of a new regular attender, we have actually outgrown our current site, and are looking for a larger and more accessible place to meet. ... As a very small Monthly Meeting we enjoy a great deal of camaraderie and personal connection, which often deepens and enlivens the time we spend together in worship. We are sometimes silent for the entire Worship session; at other times, our sharing builds into the power of a gathered meeting. Whatever the Light is, we occasionally find ourselves irrevocably steeped in it. More commonly, of course, we are simply a group of aging Friends, seeking some small measure of truth in whatever form we can find it.”





SoM Report by a Large Meeting

“_____ Meeting is a large meeting, deeply loved by members and attenders. Meeting for worship is the heart of our meeting. Though it is well attended, some find it lacking a spiritual center. Others find depth, challenge, mystery, and solace. At times, egos glare, but often the Holy Spirit shines through. Religion is a dialog--the great discussion of our community--and we engage in that dialog more than we did a few years ago.

“The conduct of our meeting for business has come under examination. We have not done our business as well as we wish we could. Over the past several years there has been a testiness or a readiness to criticize others' shortcomings. Some saw a shift to excessive concern with procedure or proper practice. ... We hope to move beyond judgmental feelings and recognize how important this loving community is to us all. We want our meeting to be more perfect than the sum of its parts. ...”

SoM Report by a Large Meeting (cont.)

“Our meeting is large enough that no one knows everyone. We have members struggling with depression, poverty, and other serious issues that go beyond our means, though not our desire, to help. ... We are making extended use of clearness committees which sometimes evolve into support groups.

“We want our lives outside of meeting to be in harmony with our Quaker values and practices. Some have made conscious environmental decisions regarding homes, work, and transportation. We try to live out our testimonies in the worlds of politics and social action, seeking truth.

“In a world where hate and retribution lead individuals and nations to ever more violent confrontations, we cling to each other. Can we build our peaceful community strong enough to serve as a model to the world? We see our faith as a candle in the dark, lighting just the next few steps we dare to take, trusting that way will open.”

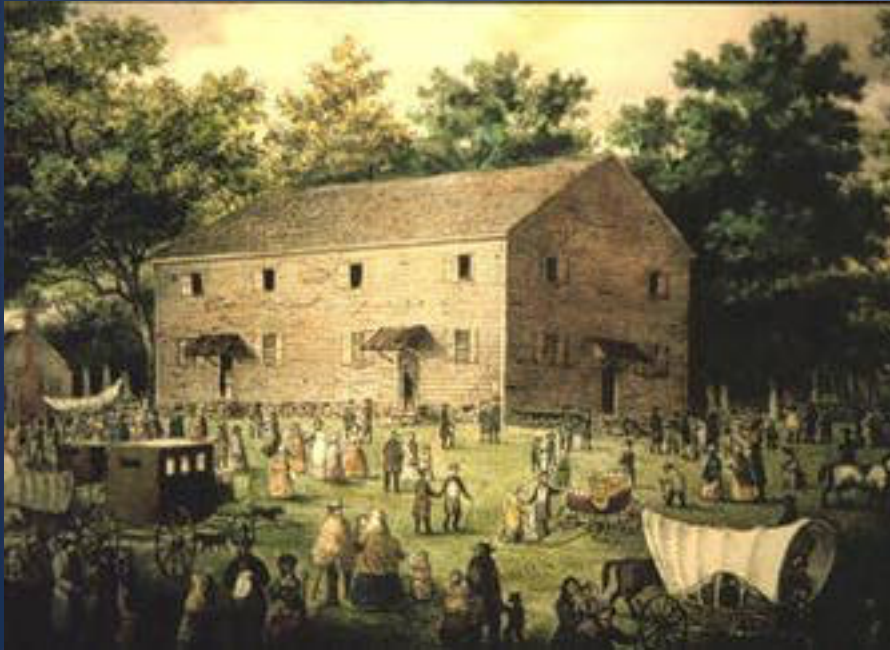


SOM Reports from Preparative Meetings and Worship Groups



PREPARATIVE MEETING: “Our primary purpose is to strengthen our conscious connection to God through group worship. ... We have struggled to carefully grow our Meeting and to attract more young adults, families with children, and Friends from a variety of backgrounds. We’ve considered advertising in local newspapers. We’ve acquired the “Inreach-Outreach Packet for Small Meetings” (2005) from FGC to assist us: it’s a slow, deliberate effort. We’ve considered having Meetings for Worship more often, and shorter First Day gatherings. Physical distance between us can make it difficult for ad hoc committees to meet.”

WORSHIP GROUP: “Yes, our _____ Worship Group continues to meet the last Sunday of every month. We continue to rotate between our house[s]. Once the ... Episcopal Church completes its new church, we may move our Worship Group into their current church. ... We have had up to 10 people attending our group. We currently enjoy the presence of several student interns ...”



What do we do with it?

“After revision and acceptance by the Meeting, the report is read at the Quarterly Meeting and given to the Quarterly Meeting Committee on Ministry and Oversight. A copy should also be sent to the Yearly Meeting Ministry and Oversight Committee.”

-PYM Faith & Practice

Readings may be all of one Monthly Meeting's SoM Report, or excerpts from several Meetings' reports bearing on a common theme

Use of SoM reports at 2006 Spring Quarterly

“At College Park Quarterly Meeting last weekend, we did an exercise of breaking into small groups to read two or three state of the meeting reports and respond to a few queries about them, including, "What one thing from this report needs to be brought back to the whole group?" I found it a very engaging and meaningful exercise.

“... the exercise at CPQM was a robust and healthy way for the community to examine itself both corporately and individually. It uncovered both commonalities among meetings and individuals as well as their differences. It truly was meaningful and deepening for me. It felt gathered, both in the small group and in the larger plenary.”



Advices for Preparing the State of the Meeting Report

<http://pacificyearlymeeting.org/fp/pymfp2001pg138.html>

appendix 1: records

1B: The State of the Meeting Report is prepared once a year by each Monthly Meeting in time to be forwarded to the spring session of its Quarterly Meeting. These reports are read at Quarterly Meeting sessions throughout the year. In contrast to the informal reports of activities given to Quarterly Meetings at other times of the year, the State of Meeting Report should be a self-examination by the Meeting and its members of their spiritual strengths and weaknesses and of efforts to foster growth in the spiritual life. Reports may cover the full range of interest and concerns but should emphasize those indicative of the spiritual health of the Meeting. They do not include statistical information, which is sent to the Statistical Clerk.

Illustration Citations: Quakers and their Meetinghouses

2 https://scontent.fsnc1-1.fna.fbcdn.net/v/t1.0-9/14100510_1192623660768229_6011503336724226424_n.jpg?oh=dfcd056f65a0c1acf2bae5535406944f&oe=586F32F5
San Jose Friends Meeting

3 <http://farmingtonmeetinghouse.org>
As the site of Genesee Yearly Meeting of Friends, the 1816 Farmington Quaker Meetinghouse was a national crucible for major reform movements in the nineteenth century.

4 http://farmingtonmeetinghouse.org/wp-content/gallery/history/interior_quaker_meetinghouse_500.jpg

5 <http://bjws.blogspot.com/2015/11/england-1670s-quaker-meetings-including.html>
England 1670s Quaker Meetings including Women by Egbert van Heemskerck the elder (British artist, 1634-35–1704) Quaker Meeting

6 <http://www.wandsworthquakermeeting.org/meeting-house.html>
Wandsworth Meeting House was built in 1778. It replaces an earlier wooden building which burnt down, making it the oldest Meeting House in the London area.

7 <http://berkshire.gothingstodo.com/event/quaker-meeting-house-tours/2016-10-02/>
The Quaker Meeting House, built in 1782 by the East Hoosuck Meeting of the Society of Friends was the place of worship of the family of Susan B. Anthony, born in Adams in 1820.

Illustration Citations: Quakers and their Meetinghouses

8 [https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/7/7d/Microcosm_of_London_Plate_064_-_Quakers'_Meeting_\(tone\).jpg](https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/7/7d/Microcosm_of_London_Plate_064_-_Quakers'_Meeting_(tone).jpg)

Conservative Friends worshipping in London in 1809. Friends are in traditional plain dress. At the front of the meeting house, the recorded ministers sit ...

Rudolf Ackermann, Quakers Meeting House, from Microcosm of London (1808)

9 <https://s-media-cache-ak0.pinimg.com/originals/87/91/5b/87915bf0f6a90f383f3da67c8f96003f.jpg>

Great Friends Meeting House, Newport, Rhode Island is the oldest religious structure in Rhode Island, dating to 1699.

10 <http://bjws.blogspot.com/2015/11/england-1670s-quaker-meetings-including.html>

Egbert van Heemskerck the Elder (British artist, 1634-35-1704) Quaker Meeting with Self Portrait 1670s

11 <http://bjws.blogspot.com/2015/11/england-1670s-quaker-meetings-including.html>

Egbert van Heemskerck the Elder (British artist, 1634-35-1704) Quaker Meeting 1670s Detail

12 <http://studymore.org.uk/grace.jpg>

This picture of Gracechurch Street Meeting c.1770 shows Isaac Sharples of Hitchin on the "facing bench" for Elders, standing with his hat hung on a peg behind him.

13 http://www.quakerjane.com/spirit.friends/plain_dress-plainquakerstoo.html

Plain-dressing Quakers from the Early Twentieth Century and Mid-1800s

Arch Street Meeting, Philadelphia. Fifth-day morning of Yearly Meeting Week, 19th of Fourth Month 1900.

Illustration Citations: Quakers and their Meetinghouses

14 <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/28223/28223-h/images/i054.jpg>

INTERIOR OF OBLONG MEETING HOUSE

On the "facing seats" are: Olive Hoag, Roby Osborn, Betsy Post, Richard Osborn, John L. Worden
QUAKER HILL - A SOCIOLOGICAL STUDY (PhD thesis) BY WARREN H. WILSON, A. M. ,
COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY, New York, 1907

15 <https://daryncambridge.com/tag/dominic-barter/>

Walking Towards Community – A Restorative Approach, with Dominic Barter

Posted on May 26, 2013 The workshop was held at the Quaker Meeting House in Dupont Circle

16 <http://imgc.allpostersimages.com/images/P-473-488-90/30/3033/BQVBF00Z/posters/first-quaker-meeting-house-in-burlington-new-jersey-a-hexagon-built-in-1683.jpg>

First Quaker Meeting-House in Burlington, New Jersey, a Hexagon Built in 1683

17 http://atlanta.quaker.org/images/worship_Mtg-390x168.jpg

The Atlanta Friends Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends is an unprogrammed, non-pastoral Quaker Meeting

18 http://www.whidbeyquakers.org/Whidbey_meeting_2.jpg

Whidbey Island Friends Meeting

At Unitarian Universalist Congregation, 20103 Hwy 525 Freeland, WA 98249

19 <https://sfquakers.files.wordpress.com/2015/11/cropped-friendsmeetingbanner.jpg>

San Francisco Friends Meeting

Illustration Citations: Quakers and their Meetinghouses

20 http://www.quakerjane.com/images/plain_dress/quakers/stillwater-monthly-meeting-1949.jpg
Stillwater Monthly Meeting held at Richland Meetinghouse, 1949.

21 <http://davidson.quaker.org/groupsign.jpg>
Davidson Friends Meeting, 625 South Street, Davidson, NC 28036

22 <http://cdn.friendsjournal.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/oldtime.jpg>
"Eirith Monthly Meeting," a oil painting by Samuel Lucas

23 <http://ptquaker.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/wow-slider-plugin/16/images/newsign480.jpg>
Port Townsend Friends Meeting, Port Townsend, Washington

24 http://www.londonquakers.org.uk/sites/default/files/styles/large/public/Meeting%20Room%205_2.jpg
Quakers have worshipped together in Wandsworth for well over three hundred years. Our Meeting House in the High Street dates from 1778 and is the oldest in the London Area.

25 http://chestnuthillskyspace.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/9772644972_9a091d9574_z.jpg
James Turrell Skyspace at the Chestnut Hill Friends Meeting in Northwest Philadelphia

26 <http://www.quaker.org/urbana/20141012%20Quaker%20Meeting%20Portrait.jpg>
Urbana-Champaign Friends Meeting 1904 East Main Street Urbana, IL 61802 (217) 328-5853

27 <http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~jrichmon/quaker/ngncmtg.jpg>
New Garden Friends Meeting, NC

Illustration Citations: Quakers and their Meetinghouses

28 <http://www.sanantonioquakers.org/meetinghouse/meetinghouse.htm>
FRIENDS MEETING OF SAN ANTONIO

Our Meetinghouse and Grounds:

By Jane F. Kolleeny - This is an excerpt of an article from the February 2008 edition of Architectural Record.

35 <https://homewoodfriends.files.wordpress.com/2015/08/cropped-homewood-people-on-steps-2015-894x381.jpg>

Homewood Friends Meeting in the Charles Village neighborhood of Baltimore City, Maryland

