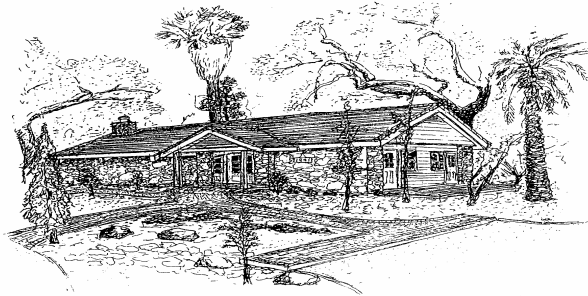


## Visalia Friends Meeting

17208 Ave 296  
Visalia, CA 93291

## Newsletter September, 2006



Visalia Friends Meetinghouse

Meeting for Business September 10, 2006

In Attendance: Greg Seastrom, David and Billie Chandler, Trudy Wischermann, Bill and Beth Lovett, Mark Koenig, John and Shirley Dackawich, Patty Howard, Graciela Martinez, Klara East, Jesse Snyder.

### M & O Committee

- Ben Pena's father passed away and we offer our condolences.
- A local family is in need of \$600 to help air condition their home next summer to help control a medical condition of one of the children. Questions that arose: could the CARE Program assist the family with bills? Air condition one room? Install a swamp cooler? It was suggested that CSET and United Way are organizations that might help. Meeting agreed to support this family. Bill, Klara and Graciela, Bob Marshall will continue to look into the situation.

The issue concerning the quality of vocal ministry during Meeting for Worship was addressed. Greg read the following section from Faith and Practice concerning the testimony of Unity:

“At times the Spirit may prompt you to speak in Meeting. Wait patiently to know that the sense and the time are right. When you are sure, have confidence that the words will be given to you. Listen to the ministry of others with an open spirit. If it is not God's word for you, it may be for others. After a message has been given, allow time to ponder its meaning and to let the Meeting return to silent worship. In speech and in silence, each person contributes to the Meeting.

### Queries

Do I come to Meeting with heart and mind prepared for worship?

In both silent and vocal ministry, do I respond to the leadings of the Holy Spirit, without pre-arrangement and in simplicity and truth?

Am I careful not to speak at undue length or beyond personal spiritual experience?

*Do we meet in expectant waiting for the promptings of the Divine Spirit?*

*Are we drawn together in a living silence by the power of God in our midst?*

The reading was followed by the question of whether we affirm the ministry of others when their ministry speaks to us. The process of “eldering” was also discussed.

“Eldering” is the loving practice of taking the time to speak with someone or bring to their attention something they might not be aware of concerning how their actions might be affecting others.

- Bill and Beth Lovett brought the proposal that the Visalia Friends Meeting take some control or oversight of the property of Quaker Oaks Farm. The Lovetts are very concerned that the gift of the property be used in a manner that reflects Quaker values in this community and in the larger global community. This might include eventual ownership of the property. The sense of the meeting is that this is being put forth for seasoning and will be brought back to the meeting at the next meeting for business.

#### Outreach Committee

- David Chandler has the website address ready to put up on the billboard. Discussion continues concerning how to place the “Seekers Welcome” statement onto the new billboard.

#### Yearly Meeting Report

- Bill Lovett gave a report on the Yearly Meeting. Attendance was low (339) possibly due to the Friends General Conference which was held on the west coast for the first time earlier this summer. Unity with Nature proposed laying down their committee. Sierra Friends Center is in financial straits. There was also discussion of the possibility that PYM split into Northern and Southern areas. There was a focus on Jubilee (an ancient rite that during the 7<sup>th</sup> year slaves were freed and debts forgiven) and the significance this might hold for Quakers.

#### Building and Grounds

- A site was selected and grounds cleared for the construction of an adobe oven.
- There will be a workday at the Meetinghouse this Saturday (Sept. 16) beginning at 8:00.

#### Retreat Committee

Klara reported on the first retreat planning meeting which was held Wednesday, Sept. 5. In attendance were Klara and Greg Seastrom. Several questions were brought to the Meeting. The first was the question of whether the retreat was too lengthy. In the comments from the last retreat a few people indicated that they thought that the Friday night session made the retreat too long. Several Friends spoke and stated that they attend the parts that they are able to attend and that the Friday night should be preserved for those who can come. Bill Lovett pointed out that there is a conflict with the planned Friday night session this year because Graciela will be presenting a session at COS on immigration. Some Friends proposed that we might attend Graciela’s Friday night presentation instead of having a session at the Meetinghouse. The planning committee will take this under consideration.

The second question concerned discerning a sense of focus for the retreat. One Friend had previously raised the concern that the retreat should focus on spiritual matters. Klara offered the following section from Faith and Practice:

“The Spirit calls Friends to acknowledge their connection to one another and to all creation. This understanding strengthens us to minister to one another and the wider community, to test individual leadings, and to witness to the truth as it is revealed to us. Living by faith is not a private matter. It calls us outward to the needs of the community at large. The Spirit we follow is present in each individual human

being. To be true to that Spirit, we must recognize and nourish the spiritual worth of all people, particularly those who have been devalued or excluded. Following the Spirit's leadings together, we hope to overcome the causes of racism, sexism, homophobia, and the neglect or disrespect of children, the poor, and the socially marginalized, in the world and in ourselves."

Friends differ from most other religions in that rather than focusing on salvation and the afterlife, Friends seek the light to guide them in taking action in the world now. The issue of global warming and peak oil will impact the poor first and hardest. Our quest for this retreat is to educate ourselves about these issues and open ourselves to the Spirit as to what our personal responsibility is to the earth and to humanity and what actions we will personally pursue to mitigate the impacts of the coming changes. The sense of the meeting on the focus of the retreat centers on the query "How do you want to be transformed?"