



11-26-01

Santa Cruz Quakers worship at new home

By CATHY REDFERN
SENTINEL STAFF WRITER

Santa Cruz Quakers have settled into their own worship space for the first time in more than 40 years.

Earlier this month, the Santa Cruz Monthly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends bought the former Neighborhood Church building on Rooney Street for \$900,000, said Traci Hjelt Sullivan, clerk of the group.

(Neighborhood Church is now called Life Spring Fellowship and moved to 1255 41st Ave.)

The group's search has spanned at least 15 years, Sullivan said, and the final decision didn't come quick or easy.

The Santa Cruz group is "unprogrammed" meaning there is no set leader or central authority.

They decide things by unity, taking into consideration all voices and the sanctity of their union, said David

Forbes, a member of the search committee.

"It's kind of a listening in multiple rounds and seasoning of what has been said," Forbes said. "And the result includes all that has been said."

It was frustrating at times, he said, and it sometimes seemed like the project was doomed.

"I can't tell you the amount of doubt that was expressed," he said, "but we've come out of it with a sense of affection rather than mistrust."

The group was founded in the late 1950s, when it met in the home of Ellie and Herb Foster. Recently, space was rented in downtown Santa Cruz.

Sullivan says it's not so much growth that allowed the purchase, but group cohesiveness and a willingness to pay the mortgage.

She believes Hospice of Santa Cruz County may help share the building and mortgage costs.



ABOVE: A group of elementary school-age girls peek through a window toward where their parents are participating in a Quaker meeting. **LEFT:** Santa Cruz Friends meet in their new home Sunday.

Shmuel Thaler/
Sentinel photos

Sullivan lives at the Quaker retreat and conference center in Ben Lomond, but says that operation is separate, though the Santa Cruz friends are members of a regional group that appoints the center's board.

Sunday was the third week the 75 or so members met in the 45-year-old building off Morrissey Boulevard beside Highway One.

A handful of members are observing the Muslim tradition of the month-long fast of Ramadan, said Tom Davis.

"It's a reminder that I'm usually pret-

ty comfortable, while millions in the world go hungry," he said. "That is an important teaching of the Quran, Jesus or the Buddha and you're as likely to hear the Buddha around here as you are Jesus."

A housewarming and basics of Quakerism class are planned for January. Call: 336-8333.

Contact Cathy Redfern at credfern@santa-cruz.com.