

Report on Friends General Conference Central Committee
Lisa Hubbell, Pacific Yearly Meeting representative/observer
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I began my term last fall as PYM's representative to the Central Committee of Friends General Conference. This body includes multiple representatives and clerks from the Yearly Meetings that are members of FGC, single observers from a few Yearly Meetings such as ours that are not members, and Friends who attend Central Committee as members of FGC committees.

Other PYM Friends in attendance at the Central Committee meeting included: Zachary Moon as a member of FGC's Executive Committee, Anthony Manousos as a member of its Christian and Interfaith Relations Committee, Elaine Emily as a member of its Traveling Ministries Committee, and John Holding as a member of its Communications Advisory Board. I have since learned that Susan Hopkins is a member of FGC's Religious Education Committee; there may be other PYM members serving on FGC committees, who I am unaware of at present.

FGC Committee Activities and Services

The Advancement and Outreach Committee maintains the website www.quakerfinder.org, which provides details and directions for FGC-affiliated meetings, and other Friends meetings and churches across the U.S. which ask to be included. It is easily searchable by geographic location, and our PYM meetings are included. A&O also developed the Quaker Quest program www.quakerquestfgc.org and provides workshops to monthly meetings that wish to offer Quaker Quest workshops in their communities.

FGC's coordinator for the Committee with Ministry on Racism, Vanessa Julye, has visited PYM as a resource person and plenary speaker for the past three years, among visits to many Yearly Meetings. CMR member Niyonu Spann offered a workshop *Beyond Diversity 101*. CMR and the Youth Ministries Committee jointly offered a workshop *Weaving Sacred Wholeness*.

The Youth Ministries Committee has been writing brief pamphlets about how to engage younger people in the life of meetings. These are available for download at www.fgcquaker.org/qy/resources-meetings and meetings are encouraged to adapt them to suit their own purposes. YMC also has an active website, and is also working on a toolkit for organizing Quaker youth retreats.

The Religious Education Committee has offered weekend intensive workshops in a program called Faith and Play, a Montessori-type curriculum for First Day Schools to explore and discuss Quaker and Bible stories.

The Traveling Ministries Committee offers a Couples Enrichment program, which just celebrated its 40th anniversary. Of 12 couples trained by this program and actively offering workshops, two are from PYM: Jeff and Kathy Richman, and Gretta and Jacob Stone.

FGC supports the clerks of member Yearly Meetings through a weekend consultation and an ongoing network.

FGC Publications

Fit for Freedom, Not for Friendship: Quakers, African Americans, and the Myth of Racial Justice, by Vanessa Julye and Donna McDaniel, was published in February 2009. An accompanying study guide is also available. The Committee with Ministry on Racism has presented numerous workshops at monthly, quarterly and yearly meetings, and for other groups, based on the book. Many of these have been led by authors Vanessa Julye and Donna McDaniel; other events have been held by 25 facilitators who they have trained.

In collaboration with Quakers United in Publishing (QUIP), FGC published an anthology of writings by Young Friends from around the world, *Spirit Rising: Young Quakers Speak*. Several author events and workshops have been held. FGC has released its first music CD, *Timeless Quaker Wisdom*, with plainsong chant settings of quotes from early Quakers, the product of songwriter Paulette Meier's time at Pendle Hill.

FGC Budget

Like many Quaker organizations, FGC has experienced a drop in financial contributions and investment income in recent years. Staff and committees have worked hard to address this proactively, to cut the budget where possible, and to plan for a scope of programs that can be financially sustainable.

The Publications Committee has been asked to generate 75% of its publication budget and 90% of its distribution budget through sales rather than contributions. Most committees have been asked to reduce their travel budgets by 20%, and to meet less frequently in person.

An active fundraising campaign called "Stoking the Spiritual Fire of Quakerism" has increased major gifts and bequests. Contributions are welcome.

FGC Staffing

Quite a few changes to FGC staffing were announced. General Secretary Bruce Birchard will be retiring in 2011, so there is an opening to fill that position.

To approach fiscal responsibility with a tightening budget, several FGC staff positions have been reduced in hours over the past year. Staff members were invited to volunteer for reductions in their own positions before further cuts were considered. A long-time receptionist was let go, and several functions were redistributed among staff, or collapsed from full-time to part-time. Youth Ministries Coordinator Emily Stewart has recently left her position.

FGC Committee Restructuring

A new umbrella Committee on Ministry, Education and Outreach will take on the work of several previous committees, with a smaller membership and a 10% reduction to its overall budget. Details on how to do this are still being seasoned. As proposed last fall:

It is proposed that this committee have three subcommittees: a Ministry Group, an Education Group, and an Outreach Group, and that most of the work be carried

out by relatively small working groups.... The scope of the work carried out by the following seven committees would be included within this section:

- a. Advancement and Outreach
- b. Christian and Interfaith Relations
- c. Ministry and Nurture
- d. Ministry on Racism
- e. Religious Education
- f. Traveling Ministries
- g. Youth Ministries

Changes Approved at Fall 2009 Central Committee

The Discernment and Long-Term Planning Committee presented a revised Minute of Purpose and Major Goals. These were approved by Central Committee:

Minute of Purpose:

Friends General Conference, with Divine guidance, nurtures the spiritual vitality of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) by providing programs and services for Friends, meetings, and seekers.

Major Goals

1. Nurture meetings and worship groups.
2. Provide resources and opportunities for meetings, Friends, and seekers to experience the Light, the living presence of God.
3. Help meetings guide Friends to discern the leadings of the Inward Teacher and to grow into ministry.
4. Transform our awareness so that our corporate and individual attitudes and actions fully value and encompass the blessed diversity of our human family.
5. Work to grow and sustain a vital, diverse, and loving community of Friends based on a shared search for unity in the Spirit.
6. Articulate, communicate, and exemplify Friends' practices, core experiences, and the call to live and witness to our faith.
7. Promote dialogue with others, sharing with them our corporate experience of Divine Truth and listening to and learning from their experience of the same.

After two years of intervisitation, Intermountain Yearly Meeting requested affiliation with FGC. This was approved at Central Committee in fall of 2009.

Upcoming Gatherings

Next year's annual gathering will be held at Grinnell College in Iowa, July 3-9, 2011.

Some years ago, FGC approved holding its 2012 gathering in the West. Nothing has been firmed up yet. It is possible that this will take place in the IMYM region, to celebrate their new affiliation.