

**Youth Program Coordinator (YPC) & Supervisory Committee (YPCSC)
Joint Reports to Annual Session
Pacific Yearly Meeting, Claremont, CA
29 July 2011**

Part I – Sarah Beutel (Mountain View / Grass Valley Meetings), Outgoing YPC

Good morning Friends. I'd like to begin my report to you with a quotation from Christina Van Regenmorter, taken from her 2008 pamphlet, *Coming into Friendship as a Gift*.

It can be tempting to look at the absence of young faces in our meeting houses and blame it on the “digital age” or on young people needing “something more lively.” However, ... I believe that they, like me, ache to have a spiritual community where they feel truly seen, truly held and deeply challenged.

During my 16-month relationship with PYM, I have arrived at a similar understanding, which is this: That whether you knew it or not, PYM created this position of Youth Program Coordinator not because PYM needed to provide “something more lively” for its youth, but because Friends of many ages felt a longing to be truly seen, held, and challenged by PYM, and believed that stronger intergenerational understanding would help.

Through my interactions with individuals, Monthly Meetings and the YPC Supervisory Committee, it has become apparent to me that rather than being an event planner or a program manager, the Youth Program Coordinator needs to be a *resource*, an *interpreter*, and a *catalyst*.

I base this belief on my 16 months of work with PYM, work that included extended visits with 21 Monthly Meetings, attendance at 11 gatherings hosted by different groupings within PYM, 3 new events that I initiated, and approximately 175 intentional one-on-one conversations with Friends about their intergenerational experiences in PYM and their hopes for youth involvement in the future. Throughout this work, I've witnessed a wide range of interest levels and commitment levels to this initiative. Not surprisingly, I have seen that my work has been most successful when Friends have gotten actively involved in the reflection and planning needed to try something new.

Let me say a little bit about my experiences as *catalyst*, *interpreter*, and *resource*:

The YPC as a *Catalyst*. The very existence of this program gives Friends a reason and opportunity to hold focused conversations about ways to nurture our youth. When meetings choose to engage in focused conversation about the current state of youth involvement in monthly, quarterly, and yearly meetings, and work together to envision new possibilities, then new doors open. For example, during a dinner in Palo Alto with

Friends from a couple different meetings, a Friend suggested the idea of combining Sunday teen programs occasionally. Separately, each of these meetings has just a few teens so that it's a challenge to sustain a teen program. Together, they hold a critical mass of teens. Since that dinner, these meetings have jointly sponsored several lively sessions of teen worship and fellowship. Key to this development was a simple dinner gathering to introduce me and to consider my role as YPC. Friends took it from there.

The YPC as an *Interpreter*: Our work of forming intergenerational relationships is akin to becoming bilingual and bicultural. When we're communicating cross-culturally we make mistakes, we struggle with how to express ourselves, and sometimes we use the wrong word and embarrass ourselves unknowingly. It takes energy and effort and courage. The ability to speak both 'adult' and 'teen' is a key part of the work of the YPC. For example, just yesterday I had a conversation with one of our FAPs about translating the teen-speak expression "hanging out" into the adult-speak expression "community building." Both labels refer to the time we must spend in fellowship to strengthen our Society of Friends – getting to know new people, caring that none are excluded, and breaking bread together. The YPC can help adults and teens understand when they are actually talking about the same thing when they might otherwise think that they are at odds.

The YPC as a *Resource*: One of the highlights of my time as your YPC has been facilitating two Friendly Adult Presence (FAP) workshops during the past few months to help prepare Friends to serve as FAPs. Consistent presence of adults is essential for successful teen programs. But the reality is, few people like jumping into a situation where they feel unprepared, and most Friends have been reluctant to serve as FAPs. The FAP workshops gave folks of all levels of experience with teens an opportunity to learn about PYM teen programs, ask questions and practice skills of intergenerational communication. The discussions were rich and participants told me that they walked away with a new confidence and energy for interacting with our teens.

In closing, I want to thank the young people of PYM for sharing your lives and your community with me. Your insight and commitment and enthusiasm have been invaluable as I worked to give shape to this job. Your vision for your community is a vision for all of us. I'm so grateful that I've gotten to play a role in this effort to make that vision a reality. You will stay in my heart as I move to Colorado, and I'll be watching from there to see where this experiment takes you.

Part II – Mary Klein (Palo Alto Meeting), Program Supervisor on behalf of the Supervisory Committee

It is a pleasure to report to you on the progress PYM has made to date in our three-year experiment of employing a Youth Program Coordinator. We have successfully completed the first sixteen months of this program, which has the goal of providing PYM with continuous support, coordination, and inspiration for our collective efforts to grow in faith and fellowship as an intergenerational community – at this annual gathering and

throughout the year – and especially to meet the spiritual needs of our teens and young adults.

On April 1, 2010, we hired Sarah Beutel to launch this program with us. Simultaneously, our newly formed Youth Program Coordinator Supervisory Committee established our own procedures for laboring together, created the administrative infrastructures needed by an employer, and clarified specific goals and objectives for the program. In short, we have been building the train as it has been moving forward. Hats off to PYM Treasurers Gary Wolff and Ed Flowers for helping make this possible!

Our committee currently consists of 5 seasoned adults: clerk Kate Watkins from Santa Monica, Mary Klein from Palo Alto, Lanny Jay from Redwood Forest, Jim Summers from La Jolla, and Elizabeth Boardman from Davis; and 3 young adults: Cara Arcuni from Palo Alto, Marc Lichterman from Berkeley, and Rebekah Percy from La Jolla. Alyssa Nelson of Davis was also a member of the committee until recently.

By trial and error, we have learned how to divide the work of this committee according to our various strengths and light. We have met in person twice this year and by conference call virtually every other week for sixteen months. We conducted a formal evaluation of our work in April 2011. One decision arising from that evaluation was for the program to emphasize its work with teens, especially those transitioning in and out of the high school years, and to deemphasize engagement with Young Adult Friends for the time being. We also achieved greater clarity that the job of the YPC is not to host activities, but to encourage and coordinate all the resources of our monthly, quarterly, and yearly meetings, and our Quaker organizations, to support the spiritual growth of our youth and the full integration of the PYM community as a manifestation of our Testimonies on Equality and Community.

After receiving Sarah's notice of resignation at the end of April 2011, our committee focused on finding a new YPC who could work well with our youth and could also respond to the wide-ranging needs of the many monthly meeting that support this program. We chose to interview three applicants from five who seemed promising, and we were in full unity in choosing Alyssa Nelson as our new YPC, starting August 1, 2011. Alyssa has over 15 years' experience working with youth and communities, including with Friends. She has been a member of this Supervisory Committee and of the planning committee that led to the creation of this program; she also served as PYM's temporary Youth Coordinator in summer 2008. We welcome Alyssa to her new role, and invite each of you to reach out to her during the year ahead.

You have heard Sarah's program report, which will be distributed to all the meetings. Her five quarters of service to PYM have brought us challenges and opportunities that we have learned from. Our committee wishes to express appreciation to Sarah on behalf of PYM for sharing her time, talent, and insight with us, and we wish her well as she ends her work with PYM on the last day of this annual gathering. Because of Sarah's efforts, we are able to enter the next phase of this program with confidence.

Part III – Alyssa Nelson (Davis Meeting), Incoming YPC

How are love and unity maintained among us? ... How have we been sensitive to the personal needs and difficulties of members and attenders, young and old? ... 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. (From our Faith and Practice, Testimony on Community)

While the Youth Program Coordinator position is primarily focused on better meeting the needs of younger Friends and on creating a more vibrant intergenerational community, one of the most exciting parts of the job for me is working in concert with Friends who are taking the challenge – and challenging one another – to live more fully our Testimonies on Community and Equality in every way, for example the M&O Subcommittee on Racial Justice. The Youth Program work is part of a larger whole, a community effort.

I am encouraged by the fact that, so far, no one has come to me and said, “I have a great idea: you should do this-or-that for us.” Instead, I’ve heard, *Will you help us...*

- *Find unity among Junior Yearly Meeting (JYM) teens and adults about how to create an even-more open, loving, trusting, safe, and inclusive community?*
- *Create stronger systems and institutional memory so that JYM can run more smoothly year-to-year?*
- *Organize more Friendly Adult Presence (FAP) and adult ally workshops on an ongoing basis so that more adults can feel prepared, welcome, and supported to build loving, appropriate adult-youth relationships? And so the ‘usual suspects’ have more people to share the work with?*
- *Find and bring back the young adults who have drifted off or left, to nurture stronger ties among Young Adult Friends and older Friends?*
- *Nurture Friends through the transitions that come with growing up and moving into, through, and out of our various age-based affinity groups?*
- *Build upon what we have already in our local, quarterly, and yearly meetings, and our Quaker organizations, to coordinate them better and find ways to have more service and fellowship that attract and keep us engaged?*
- *Create the container – the intentional space – to attend to one another?*

With great thanks to Sarah Beutel, the Supervisory Committee, and many individual Friends and Committees, I close this report asking us all to consider now and for the future, *“How are love and unity maintained among us?”*

- end report -