

Representative Committee

March 1, 2014

Worship Sharing on Inclusivity in Pacific Yearly Meeting at our Annual Sessions

A note from the Clerk: Nomenclature in the Yearly Meeting

Words and names reflect the assumptions we make. Many use the initials “PYM” to refer only to the Annual Session (AS)—even sometimes just its Senior members. Yet members (and some would say, also attenders) of monthly meetings and worship groups who do not attend the AS are still part the larger body of PYM. It is recommended that we use “PYM” to refer to this larger body, and “Annual Session” to refer to the event that happens one week each year.

Young Adult Friends and Junior Yearly Meeting become marginalized through the sense that they are not a full part of the larger body, and Senior Yearly Meeting is seen as the decision making body.

Worship sharing was invited around our use of these terms. The record of the worship sharing is appended.

- You cannot attend FGC or YM any more than we can attend the United States of America. If you think that FGC is a summer gathering, then you are not part of it; and similarly, if YM is a gathering, then you are not part of YM. These are not events – they are bodies.
- “Annual Gathering” seems more sociable than Annual Session. Societal issues surround us challenge the younger generation and contribute to feelings of marginalization.
- A Friend spoke to walking through the doors of a meetinghouse at age 17. He was a younger Friend, but never a Young Friend. How have we managed to compartmentalize our spiritual community? Can we drop the “Young” in Young Adult Friends, and the “Junior” in Junior Yearly Meeting?
- The schedule reflects our mental compartmentalization – if we want to include everyone, the schedule must facilitate that. Our nominating process must also reflect all ages.
- The naming of ourselves makes a difference. The name of the Friends for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer Concerns Committee evolved over time as it became more dedicated to inclusivity. Perhaps having a YAF and a JYM makes some sense in enhancing inclusivity?
- A Friend spoke to spending many Annual Sessions with JYM. Others at the Annual Session told him that they were sorry that he had “missed Yearly Meeting.” Yet that was not his experience! He was at the throbbing heart of Annual Session, with people who were dedicated, humble and spirit-filled. There is an un-official resume for Clerk of PYM, and it has often not included attending JYM activities. Furthermore, it can be very challenging to draw busy youth into the ongoing responsibilities of the yearly meeting and include them in the nominations—especially college students who are hundreds or thousands of miles

- away, or Friends who are facing economic challenges that prevent them from attending our Annual Sessions. Furthermore, youth who do attend the AS come to be part of a community that exists only here. We are not failing them entirely, but they live in an exacting world, and we are called to be better allies to them.
- Gratitude for this reminder that we are not going to PYM – we are going to the Annual Session of PYM.
 - When young people are included in the activities of older people they are mentored, and opportunities open up for them in leadership roles in our meetings and gatherings. We invite them to step forward!
 - If we want to see more young people as part of this community, we should ask them to serve.
 - Our language is an issue of integrity. Breaking down the barriers in our YM is a wonderful thing. We are invited to attend the various business meetings to experience what is alive in those groups. When we think of ourselves as all age groups, we then notice how white we are. Without people of color, we are not representing full inclusivity.
 - The group identity of JYM and YAF is different. The JYM community can offer an important incubator for growth. YAF covers a wide range – 18 to 35 years. YAF has been seen as a separate program. Should it be an affinity group?
 - The voice of a young Friend who has grown up in the Society of Friends was heard in speaking to how the bonds of Quakerism were not strong enough to hold the needs of young Friends. Young people have gone because they are sick to death of the bickering and “wordsmithing.” They don’t think we live our truth as a corporate body. She isn’t still here because she was a youth delegate on Peace & Social Order – we must go beyond having token youth on our committees. What do we need to hear from the voices that are no longer here, or from the voices of the others who attend Annual Session but are not in our plenaries?
 - If we are to be inclusive, we need to acknowledge that mentorship is a two-way street. It is not just the “senior” members mentoring the “junior” members; but vice versa and at times most profoundly the versa!