

## Unity with Nature Committee Report to Representative's Committee Palo Alto Friends Meeting - March 3-5, 2017

Precis:

Unity with Nature [UwN] Annual Retreat  
Two working groups formed  
2017 Mini-Grant Program  
New QEW Rep Andi Macleod  
PYM representation at QEW  
Interest Groups  
Asking a budget augmentation to our committee budget  
Struggles with Finances  
Appendix: What is it like to be a member of UwN? Our mission and goals

Dear Friends of Pacific Yearly Meeting,

Unity with Nature Committee [UwN] reports the following highlights of the last eight months since our gathering at Walker Creek in June.

We had our [annual in-person retreat](#) weekend November 4th and 5th, 2016 in Berkeley to make plans and get to know one another. It was fruitful. We welcomed new committee members Tom Farley of Palo Alto Meeting, Andi MacLeod of San Diego Friends Meeting, and Sharon Shen of Berkeley Friends Meeting and welcomed back returning member Shelley Tanenbaum. We formed [two working groups](#) - the Mini Grant Group and the Communications Group which is charged with facilitating and making two way communication with PYM's Monthly Meetings and Worship Groups.

The [2017 Mini-Grants Program](#) which gives grants to help monthly meetings of PYM realize new or ongoing Earthcare projects and/or to give support to traveling Environmental Ministries is up and running. There are links to the mini-grant application in several places on the PYM website, including the home page. [The deadline for submitting completed applications is June 15, 2017.](#) Awards will be announced at annual session.

Many thanks to Berkeley Friends Meeting, Palo Alto Friends Meeting, and the numerous individuals who contributed to UwN's Special Projects Fund, which, among other things, makes possible the Mini Grant Program. Voluntary Carbon Offset donations through the PYM website continues to be a convenient way to donate to Special Projects Fund.

In early November, Meagan Fisher stepped down as a Representative to Quaker Earthcare Witness [QEW]. In early February, we appointed [Andi MacLeod as a new QEW Rep](#) to replace her. Andi's term will expire at the end of Annual Session 2017.

We sent two [QEW Representatives](#), Rick Herbert and Catya de Neergaard, to QEW's Fall Steering Committee Meeting at Pendlehill. Thanks to Rick's generosity and to extra financial support from Strawberry Creek MM's fund for (traveling) Ministry, we will be able to send two representatives to QEW's Spring Steering Committee in Atlanta. Plus Rick, whose term will also expire at the end of Annual Session this year will be going as a third Rep from PYM, by paying his own way. Thank you Rick Herbert and Strawberry Creek's Worship and Ministry Committee for this needed supplement to the QEW Rep line item budget !

## INTEREST GROUPS

We sponsored the interest group, "*Report from Standing Rock*". at College Park Winter Quarterly, facilitated by Shelley Tanenbaum, General Secretary of QEW and member of Strawberry Creek Monthly Meeting. Shelley, Larissa Keeler, and other Friends visited Standing Rock late last year. Shelley spoke about the current situation at Standing Rock and the role of Friends. "The Lakota say Mni Wiconi – Water is Life. What do Friends say?"

We have proposed two Interest Groups [IGs] for Annual Session 2017. They are:

\* "*Environment Concerns and Earthcare Consultation*" What are your concerns about the environment in these challenging times? What Witness to these concerns are you living or advancing? With reference to PYM's 2015 minute calling for us to share our answers, and with special interest on what monthly meetings are doing, there will be short presentations and general sharing.

\* "*Poetry, Worship, and Worship sharing in Unity with Nature*" Walking slowly in silence, opening our senses to the many living beings of Walker Creek, being renewed by God's Creation, and including the natural world in our Worship. If you like, bring a poem or two to share on the themes of nature, God, and Life.

## BUDGETS and FINANCIAL CONCERNS

UwN is seeking a fiscal year [FY] 2016-2017 [budget augmentation at Rep Com](#) to its committee line item to get us through September 30, 2017. We are asking for \$150 more. The UwN Committee line item is used for our phone conference calls, occasional small supplies and incidentals, and travel to our annual in-person retreat. We need one in-person meeting a year in order to get to know one another a bit and work together productively. In recent years, the retreats have been in the greater Bay Area where most of the members live, but it is crucial to include SoCal and other far flung Friends at our annual retreat.

### [A History of the Budget for this line item](#)

The current FY 2016-2017 budget for UwN committee is \$300. For many years, the budget was \$1000 - in my opinion, a fair amount. But due to a horse trade of convenience at Rep Com 2015, the FY 2015-2016 budget was lowered to \$550 - which worked fine for that particular year only because we didn't have SoCal members traveling to our Retreat.

We are mindful of PYM's needs for fiscal prudence. UwN decided to request \$750 for next FY (2017-2018) \$750 for the UwN Com line item. We figured thusly:

The travel expenses for our once a year in-person meeting are:

2 rt flights from So Cal - \$400

2 rt mileage from out of town (or another flight depending on where members live) \$150

Plus \$200 for phone conferences -including for our 2 working groups - and for incidentals.

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TOTAL \$750

[Money issues](#) have taken up a considerable amount of the UwN clerk's and committee's time for the past several years with both the QEW Rep budget and the committee line item budget underfunded this year and the QEW Rep budget underfunded for at least three years. One could also say that money struggles have taken a considerable amount of PYM's time as a whole -starting with finding a way to fund the Youth Coordinator Position. There is a move afoot to join FGC, which if agreed to, will have a cost. I hope if we join FGC, it won't be at the expense of defunding committees or getting rid of needed Reps to other Quaker organizations.

UwN is in Unity that [two Representatives](#) to the twice a year QEW Steering Committees is best - both for the hands-on working power they contribute to QEW and for the up-to-date issues and news from the wider Quaker and activist world and commitment they bring back to PYM. Because of the breadth of issues and areas of knowledge, it is advisable to have two Reps - especially at this time of great challenges to care taking of God's Creation. The steering committee costs vary from place to place and year to year. But, unless the QEW Rep budget is raised in FY 2017-2018, we will be forced to reduce the number of QEW Reps to one, or, at best depending on circumstances, one in the Fall and two in the Spring.

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We would welcome a few more committee members For more information, here below is an Appendix containing our mission, goals, and what it is like to be a member statements.

Gratefully submitted,

Catya de Neergaard  
clerk, Unity with Nature Committee

## [APPENDIX](#)

Description of what it is to be a member of PYM's Unity with Nature Committee  
updated June 2016

To fulfill its goals and Charter, Pacific Yearly Meeting's Unity with Nature Committee [UwN] usually meets in person at the annual session and has a one and a half to two

day retreat usually in the Fall, preferably in Nature, to plan its year. [PYM pays for travel expenses to the 1-2 day retreat. Hosts arrange hospitality] UwN has 4 to 9 conference calls a year of 1-2 hours in length, usually on a weekday evening, paid for by PYM to further its goals and plans. Members are expected to attend these meetings and calls in order to help discern and come to unity on a variety of issues related to the goals and Charter.

Besides whatever special educational projects may be on offer, the committee has ongoing smaller tasks such as fund raising for the mini grant program, the mini grant program itself, doing the minutes, and the master mailing list. At a minimum, members are expected to take on a small task. Members are very welcome to bring their leadings for new special projects which they are willing to work on and that further the goals and Charter of Unity with Nature.

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Note: this Charter from PYM was revised by Unity with Nature Committee on 10/25/2014, but not yet approved by a plenary session.

### Unity with Nature Committee's Charter from Pacific Yearly Meeting

This committee acts on behalf of Yearly Meeting on spiritual concerns related to the environment. It strives to keep alive in the consciences of Friends the spirituality of and the kinship with all creation. It has the function to educate, inform, inspire, and give Witness about earth care and the environment.

The Committee may have several subcommittees such as: (1) Sustainability, (2) Service projects and internships, (3) Nature experiences and outings, (4) Education and interest groups.

The committee has nine members, serving three-year overlapping terms, with three members appointed annually. Two Pacific Yearly Meeting [PYM] representatives to the national Quaker Earthcare Witness [QEW] (formerly named 'Friends Committee on Unity with Nature') are members ex-officio, if not already members of PYM's Unity with Nature Committee.

#### Tasks

- \* Appoints PYM's representatives to QEW
- \* Supports publications such as Earthlight Magazine and QEW newsletter.
- \* Encourages and supports QEW and other Friends' environmental initiatives such as Friends Committee on National Legislation [FCNL], Friends Committee on Legislation in California [FCL-CA], and Quaker Institute for the Future [QIF].
- \* Nominates candidates for Earthlight's Board of Directors
- \* Provides means for communications among PYM Friends concerned about the environment and with Friends similarly concerned nationally and internationally
- \* Proposes and conducts interest groups and nature-oriented worship at Quarterly and Yearly Meeting sessions.

- \* Encourages change toward sustainable lifestyles by Meetings and their members and attenders.
- \* Raises funds to further its work.

Goals and Projects may include:

- \* Sponsoring an internship program for Young Friends
- \* Responding to queries such as recommendations for books and other educational materials related to care of the earth
- \* Proactive educational programs such as the mini-grant program
- \* Proactive educational and fundraising programs such as the dime a gallon carbon credit program
- \* Seasoning concerns arising out of Witness, we nurture the process of taking those concerns towards a minute at annual session.