

Report from PAFM Representative to Pacific Yearly Meeting

Palo Alto Friends Meeting, Meeting for Business, March 11, 2018
George Mills

Last weekend (Mar 2-4) I attended the PYM Representative Committee meeting (RepCom) in Pasadena, as your Representative from Palo Alto Meeting. It was a pleasure to spend time at Orange Grove, the Meeting I grew up in, and to meet with old (and young) F/friends from all over California, Nevada, Mexico and Hawaii. RepCom is both a “business meeting” and a valuable opportunity to strengthen ties between monthly meetings and the yearly meeting.

It’s my job as Representative to share information with you about what is going on in other meetings across the region and what PYM as an organization is up to. You can also learn about PYM at www.pacificyearlymeeting.org (referred to in this document as “the website”).

There are about 50 monthly meetings and worship groups within PYM, from Guatemala in the south to Humboldt in the north, Reno in the east to Hawaii in the west. Not all sent representatives to RepCom, but a goodly number did. There was much information shared at RepCom. Committee reports are available for browsing on the website. The minutes of the meeting will be posted there soon. This report can only touch on a few of the highlights.

The next gathering of PYM will be July 13-18, 2018, at rustic Walker Creek Ranch, an outdoor school and conference center west of Petaluma. Annual Session is a wonderful week of fellowship and sharing to which all are invited. The theme this year is “**Faithfulness: A Call to Practice Radical Vulnerability and Love.**” By letting ourselves be open and vulnerable in company with others we reach a deeper place than our intellect or our will. Someone who saw me right after I returned from Annual Session a couple of years ago said I was “glowing”. It’s true. For more information see the **Clerk’s Call to Annual Session 2018** on the website at <https://www.pacificyearlymeeting.org/2018/documents/2018-as-docs/clerks-call-to-pacific-yearly-meeting-2018-annual-session/>. THEN CONSIDER ATTENDING.

Some more specifics about Annual Session 2018:

- Registration may open earlier this year than in the past. It will be online only, no paper.
- The fee schedule will be the same as last year. Financial assistance is available. The process for applying for assistance involves coordination between your monthly meeting and the yearly meeting, which takes time.
- Extra work will go into ride-share coordination.
- One item of business will be to again consider the question of affiliation with FGC. Additional information is on the website. Meetings are encouraged to discuss ahead of time and send feedback by **April 30**.
- Teachers and “FRAPs” (Friendly Responsible Adult Presences) are again needed for the Children’s and Teen Programs. If you can volunteer, see online for details.

Some more announcements about PYM generally. Note: We heard reports at RepCom from 17 committees and officers (all available on the website). I took 11 pages of notes. These are just a few highlights.

- The Faith and Practice Revision Committee is moving to a model of “rolling revisions”, by which they will periodically post draft revisions of sections of Faith and Practice on the website. There will be instructions to monthly meetings on how to work with the material. Meetings will discern their “sense of the meeting” with regard to the revisions, and return this to the committee. Final revisions would be subject to acceptance at/by Annual Session.
 - The vision is that approved sections would be available right away electronically and possibly through print-on-demand. Fully new paper editions would occur every few years.
 - There was considerable enthusiasm at RepCom for this new mode of revision, but also words of caution. One said in effect “We are on the cusp of examining our spiritual processes in a whole different way than we have before. ... I have experienced ‘covered meetings’ online, but also I’m learning about social media addiction, ways we get addicted that we don’t even recognize. ... We are on the cusp of something that absolutely is going to happen. We just need to keep asking questions. May it grow in a way that serves the Spirit well.”
 - “Any way of getting our Meetings more connected with the Yearly Meeting is great.”
 - “This is an opportunity to involve younger people. They can be involved in real discernment while exercising their technical skills.”
- Children’s Program Committee would like to develop curriculum materials for new teachers at Annual Session (and perhaps for use by MMs). Volunteers needed!
- The new Religious Education subcommittee of M&O also is seeking Friends with interest and passion for that work.
- The new Communications Committee is very busy improving the website, preparing the online registration, defining requirements for a long-desired “PYM database” and considering online policies. They would welcome volunteers to help with this and other work, whether you have technical or non-technical (“bridge”) skills.
- Latin American Concerns Committee reports that a new Scholarship Program for Dreamers was started at Sacramento Meeting.
- Both of the PYM 2016-17 budgets (annual session and general) showed surpluses, but reserves are still below desirable levels.
- In brief introductions, many meetings reported struggling with diminishing membership and difficulty finding people to serve on committees. It is a widely shared problem.
- Many meetings are experiencing a diversity of approaches to political action and individual leadings. Friends are encouraged utilize the pamphlet “**Faithfulness in Action: Supporting Leadings in Pacific Yearly Meeting**”, which distills the multi-year discernment process M&O took us through on this topic. Available on the website.

One final piece of news I first learned about at RepCom: There is a new Yearly Meeting forming in the Pacific northwest. Sierra-Cascades Yearly Meeting is holding its inaugural meeting May 18-20, 2018, in Canby, Oregon. I don’t know anything more about this except what is on their website, which includes the statement: “We are led by the Spirit to commit ourselves to recognizing the full participation of LGBTQ+ people in all aspects of the life of Sierra-Cascades Yearly Meeting of Friends”. Four affiliated monthly meetings are listed.

---- George Mills, your PYM Rep