

## Quarterly Meetings Coordination Team Report to PYM Annual Session 2018

Dear Friends

Our group has been meeting for two years (Fall 2016-Spring 2018) as part of the Coordination Teams established by the Pacific Yearly Meeting Presiding Clerk. As often happens with a leading, our purpose and inspiration for meeting together is evolving. What began as a proposed method for increasing connection between the Quarterly and Yearly Meeting and troubleshooting mutual concerns has become a deeply moving experience for all involved. We have struggled with a way to bring forward what we have experienced to the wider body of Friends. As a group we have shared about the functioning of our Meetings, but, perhaps more importantly, we have been personally transformed by the experience of meeting together. The members of our group have regularly commented on the special feel of our meetings and this document attempts to reflect some of that facet of our time together. This report does not attempt to convey the results of our deliberations about the challenges and hopes for our Meetings - those are still in development. Instead we would like to share about the feel of the experience which, for many of us, meets a longing and need that unfortunately goes unmet in much of the rest of our lives and work in Quaker community. We yearn for this to be commonplace.

Our meeting times have been gathered. That is to say that our worship has been deep and we could feel Spirit moving through and with us. We often achieved no specific outcome but felt we were faithful. Friends in our group have experienced deep personal support, comfort and encouragement through being able to participate in our meetings. Many of us have felt our faith in the Quaker way rejuvenated or sparked in a new way. We were clear that our time was fruitful and benefiting our Meetings even though we rarely came out with specific actions. We shared ideas and resources - if we had had time we would have gladly set up a reading list and a weekend retreat or three to meet! There was a persistent longing from us all to be able to spend more time together. Despite logistical challenges, we managed to meet for a half day 'retreat' after RepCom 2018. Some others have joined us at points but largely the core group has stayed the same for nearly two years.

It is worth noting the context in which our meetings have taken place. They have been part of what we might characterize as a shift from siloed work towards more collaboration. This has been happening across the Yearly Meeting. In this case it is a connection between the Quarterly Meetings' and the Yearly Meeting's servant leadership. In other areas, it has included the teen and children's programs working more collaboratively. In both cases the Youth Programs Coordinator has played a key role.

Another important aspect to note is that the members of our group are not part of some clique or particular historical group in the Yearly Meeting. We have different histories, different personal relationships and different theologies. This is a group brought together in service, not from a shared history or as a special friendship group. Importantly, although we are not all historically personal buddies, very few in the group were completely new to each other. Some of the friendships and personal interactions in the group go back decades. We do not vary much in ethnicity but we do vary in age and gender. What our group does have in common, though we don't talk about it much, is that each of us holds our service to Friends as an important part of our lives and invests a significant amount of personal resources into our Quaker work.

In addition, it appears that we all have a strong sense of connection to the Divine, however we name the Unnameable. We are clearly united in believing we can, and will be, led by God. The importance of this is hard to underestimate. We also share a history of being experienced in the ways of Friends, another

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likely critical factor in the depth of our worship. Despite being a group of fallible human beings, because each of us is working our own personal journey, we were not having to manage damaging personal behaviors that rip the fabric of community. Our mutually respected spoken, and unspoken, Quaker norms assisted us in being together in a sacred space.

Because of the depth of worship, facilitated to a significant degree by the skillful clerking of our Presiding Clerk, Friends were able to be honest and vulnerable with one another. This made space for authentic community where we moved beyond individualism to being gathered under our Guide. We believe that it is from this place of having true worship in Spirit, with committed Friends and no agenda, beyond being faithful, that prophetic witness can arise. We all long for prophetic witness in the world and we are clear that it is from this place of being spiritually grounded that such transformative action can come. Without it, and the personal transformation that comes out of it, we are reduced to political action.

We share our experience of our time together in the hope that it provokes consideration among Friends as to what some of the ingredients for soul-nourishing, deeply inspiring worship and community might look like. We are glad to share the joy we have found in our service to our Meetings and hope to inspire Friends to similar experiences.

Joyfully and humbly submitted,

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