

Pacific Yearly Meeting Elder to the Presiding Clerk Report to Representative Committee 2020

SUMMARY

This is a report from the Elder of the Presiding Clerk of Pacific Yearly Meeting. In this report, I offer a description of the Elder-Clerk relationship for the second year of the Clerk's service, from post Annual Session July 2019 to Representative Committee, March 2020.

When I wrote the report on my first year as Elder for Sandy Kewman, the Presiding Clerk of Pacific Yearly Meeting, I spoke of having to lay our long-term friendship aside in order to discern if I was being called to the role of Elder. At that time Sandy and I had been friends for almost 40 years and close neighbors for the past 15, seeing each other almost daily. Laying aside our friendship was not trivial, nor, as it turned out, possible. This became clear in September of 2019 when Sandy told me she and Don had bought a house in a retirement community an hour away and were moving.

It is not an exaggeration to say I was stunned. As friends, as Friends, as neighbors, as dailies, Don and Sandy had become our family. I was distraught at their leaving.

When Sandy called, we had just completed our first Annual Session and I felt an abiding commitment to the work we were doing together. Now we would no longer be meeting weekly in my loft. We would be meeting on Zoom. I did not know what it would mean to our partnership as Elder and Clerk. In particular, what it would mean to my commitment and experience as Elder.

It has been almost six months since our friends stopped being our neighbors. Our friendship has made adjustments and we are finding our way. Clearly this longtime friendship has survived the transition with our love still intact.

I have been surprised to find that my experience and commitment as Elder has not only survived, but has strengthened. There is a simplicity to our meetings now, and there seems to be less need for the extra conversation that goes with a neighborly exchange. It is almost as though the losses that I experienced in Sandy's moving have been gains in my experience of eldering. As we sit in worship online, I have a sense of being quietly present, with nothing extraneous. I feel a Presence in the room. Our Zoom worship can be a gathered worship. Our meetings are held.

As we have continued into this second year of her clerkship, I am witness to Sandy's increasing strength and clarity as a clerk, her ability to draw from a deep well of spiritual truth to minister to our community. The blessing of being an elder can be the opportunity to go beyond witnessing to partnership, drawing from one's own deep well to nurture and bring forth that ministry.

Jesus commanded that we not simply love one another, but that we love one another as he loves us. That love goes beyond being close neighbors, is deeper than friendship and finds its way to the heart beyond our knowing. This eldering work is calling me into that mystery.

Respectfully submitted,
Dorothy Henderson, Elder to the Presiding Clerk