

December 2, 2010

Dear Friends of Pacific Yearly Meeting –

Upon completing my first half-year as PYM's Youth Program Coordinator, I write to share with you some of the accomplishments, delights, and challenges that I have faced – with my supervisory and support committees – in creating and filling this new position. My intention is for this letter to be the first in a series of brief quarterly epistles to everyone in PYM.

I love being on this journey with you. Over the past six months, I have visited and worshiped with one yearly gathering of PYM, three quarterly gatherings, five monthly meetings, and six ad hoc gatherings of adults and youth in PYM. I've held one-to-one conversations with adults and teens from all corners of California, Reno, and Las Vegas, and every conversation has been filled with ideas and excitement and hope about what PYM youth programs can be. This community cares deeply for its young people. Some themes that have come up again and again are: teens deeply value this community and want to continue strengthening those relationships, adults and teens would like more relationships with each other but at times aren't sure how to proceed, and Monthly Meetings desire to support teens and want help knowing how to do so.

So far, the highlight of my time as PYM's Youth Program Coordinator was a moment during the teen camping trip to Big Sur in August. We were sitting around a campfire after a period of worship, and one of the teens asked, "What goes on in your head during Meeting for Worship? Who do you pray to?" It was bliss...sitting back and watching the spiritual curiosity arise in a natural setting and listening to the group wrestle with those questions. That's what this job is about for me—creating spaces and opportunities for youth to engage in spiritual exploration within the safety of community.

One challenge has become evident to me through a multitude of conversations: teens and adults in PYM have high expectations of each other. People of all ages have expressed a desire for more intergenerational engagement at Quarterly and Yearly gatherings, but sometimes feel disappointed with how those events turn out. I'm excited to be in a position to help facilitate communication and building of these essential relationships.

To that end, my supervisory committee and I are planning a workshop for Friendly Adult Presences (FAPs) and for anyone who wants to explore their potential inner FAPness. Our tentative plan is to hold this workshop in this upcoming February in Northern California and in April in Southern California. Contact me if you are interested. Our youth and intergenerational gatherings depend on having willing, able, and involved adults.

It is clear to me that PYM shares my belief that relationships between young people and adults are important. Teens who have told me that they are getting what they need from their Monthly Meetings have also said that the reason for this is that they know particular adults in their Meetings who will serve as their allies and will support them in asking for what they need. I look forward to working with you to make this scenario the norm throughout PYM, and I also look forward to devoting increased attention to the particular needs of young adult Friends as well.

I eagerly await the opportunity to write you again in a few months. In the meantime, please feel free to contact me with any questions, suggestions, or concerns. I would love to hear from you.

In peace,

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