

2/24/12

**Experimentation and Implementation Subcommittee
of PYM Ministry and Oversight
Report to Representative Committee**

Scope of work:

This document is not intended to be a complete report, but a working paper to help Ministry & Worship (M&O) and PYM Clerk find ways to adjust and/or remodel the Annual Gathering (AG) to better suit the needs of Pacific Yearly Meeting (PYM).

This subcommittee consists of a parent of elementary school age children, a parent of a teen, a Young Friend who grew up in the Children's Program and Junior Yearly Meeting (JYM), a member of M&O with major PYM responsibilities and a person who has been involved with JYM, and served on M&O previously.

This subcommittee met by phone conference 4 times for approximately a total of 5 hours. Individually, we have spent uncounted time reading, thinking about the issues and writing this working paper.

This subcommittee gleaned information from reports, observations and evaluations mainly from those who have attended AG, and not necessarily from those who don't attend.

This report focuses on changes to the AG. A future report will concern itself with PYM structure as a whole.

We used the following Faith & Practice Advice on Simplicity adapted for the AG as a model for conducting our committee work and as a goal of what AG should aim for:

“Does AG center its life in an awareness of God's presence so that all things take their rightful place? Does AG keep its life uncluttered with things and activities, avoiding commitments beyond its strength and light? Is the life of AG & PYM so ordered that it helps all of us to

simplify our lives?

And from Thomas Kelly, A Testimony of Devotion:

“Life is meant to be lived from a Center, a divine Center. Each one of us can live such a life of amazing power and peace and serenity, of integration and confidence and simplified multiplicity, on one condition--that is if we really want to...Life from the Center is a life of unhurried peace and power. It is simple. It is serene. It is amazing. It is triumphant. It is radiant. It takes no time, but it occupies all our time.”

AG Concerns:

In reading thru reports and evaluations we found many words describing peoples reaction to AG. Generally Worship/Sharing and Worship were highly regarded. However other activities or the work of PYM included the following: Too busy, too many activities, hectic, overwhelming, chaotic, disorienting, rude, wrangling, narcissistic, too much work-not enough play, not relevant, burned-out.

So, while our Testimonies, Advices & Queries and Sages give us beautiful examples of how to live our lives in that centeredness, AG comes up short for some. This subcommittee has attempted to listen to those concerns and proposed the following changes to the structure of AG.

Importance of nurturing ‘Gathered’ or ‘Covered’ Meetings

The first item this committee came to unity on was the desire for AG to nurture our way of doing business so there are more opportunities for ‘gathered’ or ‘covered’ meetings. Finding Unity is a fragile process that requires adequate time for discernment. Business Meeting’s finding Unity on a far-reaching or timely issue is an important reason we gather together. It’s something that needs to be demonstrated to our youth and those newer to our form of Business Meeting.

We have recommended a number of ways M&O and the Clerk can reduce the busyness without removing Business from the AG.

So while the time allocated for Business is less, it is hoped that the

quality of the business will be higher. In addition, some of the Plenary for Business time slots can be handled as 'Seasoning Sessions' which will provide flexible space that can allow AG to move as the Spirit guides us.

Coordinating age related group activities

We recommend limiting adult activities to within the Children's Program hours so parents don't have to choose between participating and parenting. This means Transformative Quakers and Bible Study sessions are moved into the Children's Program hours.

We recommend activities the whole family can participate in be placed outside the Children's Program hours.

Note: some in JYM are over 18 and legal adults. Most YFs are legal adults. To honor those adults still in JYM and YF, we have created a new designation, Senior Yearly Meeting (SYM) in lieu of 'PYM' or 'the adults'. This also honors our most senior members.

We recommend SYM activities be grouped in the morning when JYM and YFs tend to be asleep. We recommend JYM and YF activities be grouped at night when SYM tends to be asleep. We recommend inter-generational activities be planned in late morning, afternoon and early evening when everyone is awake and can participate.

There is ongoing interest in more inter-generational activities. JYM and SYM schedules should be synchronized early in the scheduling process for best interaction. Young Friends need to be brought into SYM thru a mentoring program.

We recommend the policy of the Children's Program picking up and delivering children to parents at meal times be carried forward. This allows parents to not be late or have to leave their activities early to connect with children.

Mealtimes as community time

Mealtimes are the largest intergenerational gatherings and happen 3

times a day. They can be used to foster a better sense of 'being in community'. We recommend meal times be designated as Community Time and NO business be conducted. No committee meetings, no interest groups, no affinity groups.

Appropriate activities during meal times are:

- ⤴ Reading announcements, (saving business meeting time),
- ⤴ Introduction to Interest Groups or committees
- ⤴ Skits, line dancing, (reducing length of Family Night)
- ⤴ Cooperative group games (i.e.: which table can eat in total silence the longest)
- ⤴ Oral Quaker history readings.
- ⤴ Reading of bios of Friends who are named in Memorial Meeting.
- ⤴ Whatever contributes to a feeling of "inter-generational community" and still accommodates family together time.

Committee Work

We recommend a designated Committee Time each day so committee work is done in a timely and focused manner. This will also reduce committees trying to meet during meals, early in the morning, late at night or miss Worship/Sharing because that is the only daily time slot for a committee to meet daily.

We recommend creating 2 Worship/Sharing times for more flexibility.