

Peace and Social Order Committee

Report to Pacific Yearly Meeting
July 2014

In previous annual sessions there has been a question of process and purpose of minutes of concern. In response to this issue, Peace and Social Order (PSO) responded by drafting a process that clarifies the issues surrounding minutes of concern for the committee.

There were several questions we wanted to clarify with these procedures, including: What is their purpose, on behalf of whom do we speak, and what is the process for presenting minutes of concern to annual session.

PSO sees the purpose of minutes of concern as a statement that reflects a leading of the spirit and is a simple and clear expression of our faith.

When there is a minute of concern presented at annual session, do Friends present speak on behalf of themselves or on behalf of all Pacific Yearly Meeting (PYM)? It is our belief that Friends at the annual session speak as the spirit leads them, and not on behalf of all constituents of PYM.

We wanted to ensure that if PSO brought a minute of concern for PYM consideration, that it was a spirit led matter that has been considered by more than just PSO. Each minute of concern must be brought forth to PYM with the unity of PSO and at least two Quaker organizations whenever possible.

Urgent matters like the imminent threat of war require unity within PSO and the clerks of Ministry and Oversight and the clerk of PYM.

These are the procedures that PSO approved to facilitate the work of the committee. We are not asking for formal approval from PYM. We welcome comments and suggestions and the greater wisdom of Friends. The procedures are provided as a separate attachment to this report. (Attached here as pages 2 and 3 of this report, plus as a stand alone PDF download on PYM web site.)

Procedures for Presenting a Minute of Concern at Pacific Yearly Meeting Annual Session

Purposes of minutes of concern:

1. To draw upon the collective wisdom and spiritual power of Friends present at the Pacific Yearly Meeting (PYM) Annual Session in order to insure that the minute is accurate, faithful to our Quaker testimonies and truly reflects a leading of the Spirit among Friends as we understand it.
2. To lend the authority of the PYM Annual Session to concerns brought by a local or quarterly meeting, an individual with a leading, or a Quaker organization, thus increasing the effectiveness of those under the weight of this concern. Others, including elected officials, pay more attention when a statement comes from a large representative body rather than from a local one or an individual.
3. To insure that the minute circulates as widely as possible.

Wording of a minute of concern:

A minute of concern is a simple and clear expression of our faith. It consists of a short background statement regarding the concern followed by a brief minute that takes a position and recommends an action. The background statement and minute will be considered separately. The background statement may be used when the clerk is authorized to send a letter to elected officials, organizations and "Friends everywhere."

Seasoning Minutes of Concern Prior to the Annual Session;

1. Friends gathered at the Annual Session have authority to speak on behalf of themselves, but do not speak for all constituent members of Pacific Yearly Meeting. Thus minutes of concern approved at the Annual Session are spirit led statements by those gathered at the Annual Session, and are not binding on constituent monthly meetings, their members and attenders. This understanding is analogous to the practices of Friends Committee on National Legislation, which gathers input from a broad spectrum of Friends but does not claim to speak on behalf of all Friends. Although the Annual Session has representatives from constituent Meetings in Pacific Yearly Meeting, Friends at the Annual Session seek to be led by the promptings of the Spirit present amongst them at the time they gather, and not by their notions of what their local Meetings might want. Thus minutes approved by those at the Annual Session should begin with an explicit qualification: *'Friends gathered at the ___th Annual Session of Pacific Yearly Meeting, held in ___(LOCATION)___ on ___(DATE)_, after careful discernment, approved the following minute. Etc.'*
2. Minutes of concern presented to PYM Annual Session by Peace and Social Order Committee (PSO) reflect spirit led matters that Meetings, individual Friends, and Quaker organizations have considered and acted upon. In all cases,

Procedures for Presenting a Minute of Concern at
Pacific Yearly Meeting Annual Session (continued)

- PSO must come to unity about presenting such a request before it is brought to the Annual Session for consideration. Before they are sent to PYM PSO,
- a. Minutes of concern arising in Southern California must be approved by a monthly meeting and by a quarterly gathering of Southern California Quarterly Meeting.
 - b. Since College Park Quarterly does not consider minutes of concern, at least two monthly meetings in College Park Quarterly Meeting must approve minutes addressing the same concern before the concern is brought to PYM PSO.
 - c. Meetings not belonging to a quarterly meeting that are under the care of Pacific Yearly Meeting (such as monthly meetings and worship groups in Hawai'i) may, upon approving a minute of concern, present the minute directly to PYM PSO for consideration.
 - d. A concern may also be sent directly to PYM PSO by representatives of organizations such as Friends Committee on National Legislation and American Friends Service Committee.
3. If a pressing emergency (such as the imminent threat of a war) occurs just prior to Yearly Meeting's Annual Session and Friends are led to respond, Friends gathered at the PYM Annual Session may speak out as Spirit leads them. In such cases, the procedure is for Friends to bring this concern to PSO, Ministry and Oversight Committee (M&O), and the Presiding Clerk for their consideration. If PSO, M&O and the Presiding Clerk are in unity about doing so, PYM PSO will present a minute of concern to the Annual Session for possible approval.