

Unity with Nature Committee Report to Annual Session 2017

Outline

Announcements

1. Interesting in serving as PYM's Representative [Rep] to Quaker Earthcare Witness [QEW]?
2. Open application period for Unity with Nature Committee [UwN's] Mini Grant Program
3. Share your and your Meeting's Witness of earth care at the interest group "**Friends Earthcare Consultation**".
4. UwN would welcome additional members – especially from Meetings not already represented on UwN. Please see the UwN's "Charter and Goals" and "Job Description for Members" on the PYM website and or talk to a UwN member for more info. Please contact Nominating Committee, if you are willing to be appointed.

Report

1. General remarks about UwN this year
2. Communications issues
3. UwN's responds to M&O's two proposals: A. on restructuring and B. new protocols for minutes of concern
4. Budget struggles and the number of QEW Reps
5. What else is UwN doing at Annual Session?

Announcement Details

1. Are you interesting in serving as PYM's Representative [Rep] to Quaker Earthcare Witness [QEW], the North American network for Friends with earth care concerns? The job is to go to QEW's twice yearly conferences and bring back earth care trends and leadings from the wider Quaker World to PYM, share PYM's Earthcare Witness with the wider Quaker world, and represent PYM's needs and interests to QEW. As of this writing, PYM fully funds basic travel expenses for one Rep, down from two in previous years. The Rep needs to go to all or most of PYM's annual session [AS], write a report to AS, and sometimes do presentations at AS. The QEW Rep is an *ex officio* member of UwN. On the QEW end, QEW requests that Reps go to the twice yearly face meetings and join a committee and a working group.

Please contact Catya cadeneergaard@gmail.com ASAP for more information or to express willingness to be appointed.

2. There is now an open application period for UwN's Mini Grants - meaning you can apply at any time. All grants go through a Monthly Meeting of PYM and are intended for Meeting projects or for traveling or educational ministry that further sustainability and earth care. There are up to \$300 grants available for materials for projects such grey water catchment, solar panels, on-demand water heaters, and pollinator, edible, or native plantings on the meeting house grounds. There are up to \$500 grants available for traveling earth care ministry. If interested, please download the "**UwN Mini-Grant Info & Application 2017 June**" from the PYM website. Please contact UwN committee, if you have any questions. Please let your Meetings know about these grant possibilities.
3. Share your meeting's Witness of earth care and environmental concerns and your own progress on sustainability and on independence from and divestment from fossil fuel stock the by coming to the last morning's interest group session, Wednesday 8 AM at Walker Creek entitled "**Friends**

Earthcare Consultation", sponsored by Unity with Nature Committee. As you know, we minuted ourselves at PYM AS 2015 and came to Unity that, "We hold a deep concern for over-reliance and investment in fossil fuels. We ask monthly meetings and individuals to engage in discernment on how to reduce their dependence and investment in fossil fuels. *Meetings and individuals are asked to share their efforts with the greater community.*" (Minute 2015-5)

~~~~~

## **Report from Unity with Nature Committee**

1 - This year, Unity with Nature [UwN] had a more robust committee with six active members, out of seven named to the committee. With six people energizing one another, in addition to our conference calls, we were able to have an in-person retreat in Berkeley in early November to set up plans for the year. This face time is necessary so that Friends can get to know one another a bit and bring cohesion to the committee. So, inspired by the retreat, we were able to revamp and re-start our mini-grant program for sustainability projects and earth care traveling ministry (see details above). In addition, UwN sponsored an interest group [IG] at College Park Quarterly Winter Session on Standing Rock presented by Shelley Tanenbaum and friends. We are sponsoring an interest group, "**Friends Earthcare Consultation**" at here at AS 2017 (see details above).

We networked with Peace and Social Order Committee [P&SO] and several UwN folks went to a P&SO meetings. Fundraising for our special projects fund went well last year, so we have over \$2000 for the mini-grant program and other special projects. Your many contributions to this fund are gratefully received. Thank you.

2 – Communications Issues – UwN still has difficulty communicating with Monthly Meetings [MMs]. Ministry and Oversight is now requesting that communications with MM clerks go through PYM and be posted on the website. There are concerns that this doesn't really reach Friends in MMs interested in UwN and that people, even clerks, don't click and click to read an unknown something.

UwN's next major focus will be to improve two-way communications with and between MMs on earth care concerns, leadings, and witness. We had a 'Liaison with UwN' list with a number of MMs participating. Our next project is to update this list to better serve communications with MMs. **There will be a list on the dining wall window at Walker Creek to put your updates. Please fill it in, if you know your Meeting's current liaison with UwN. If you are interested in being an UwN liaison with your Meeting, please sign up.**

**We'd love to hear more from Monthly Meetings, especially about their projects related to care of the earth and their minutes of concern.**

3 – UwN appreciates Ministry and Oversight's work in producing two Proposals: A. on restructuring and B. new protocols for minutes of concern. We provided the following feedback, as requested.

A. On restructuring: UwN is in Unity that the QEW Reps are *ex officio* members of UwN, and as such, ask that they are added to the M&O Proposal for Restructuring.

Furthermore, we resolved that:

*"With even fewer named people, We need to streamline process of dropping people named to UwN who never show up.*

*DECISION Clerk of UwN will communicate with no shows by email asking them to join us and what is going on. If there is still no response, clerk will phone them saying we are dropping them. If we still don't hear from them, we will drop them and give notice to Nom Com that they are dropped and to please find a replacement."*

UwN wasn't in Unity to reduce the number of members to five. The preponderance of UwN felt that it would be OK to reduce to five with at least one person strongly feeling that there should be at least six appointed members.

In our discussion of June 26, the following concerns were expressed:

*"Smaller means less diversity of Monthly Meetings, less people to take up the slack if some people drop out, and less people to do the work of the mini-grant program, updating the liaison and MM clerks lists, communicating with monthly Meetings, and facilitating communication between monthly meetings on environmental and stewardship concerns. Much of this work, except this year's mini-grant program isn't being done."*

B- On Minutes of Concern

Responding to Ministry and Oversight's [M&O] request for review of its proposals, Unity with Nature [UwN] labored for the better parts of two conference calls discussing M&O's Proposed New Protocols for Minutes of Concern. UwN came to Unity around the following statement to share.

*"Unity with Nature Committee appreciates that Ministry and Oversight's Proposed 'New Protocols for Minutes of Concern' is going in a good direction, but it would be better thought of as guidelines for concerns and inspirations rising from the MMs to the YM for consideration. The concepts of accountability and action in a continuing process are positive, as well as encouraging greater communication between the MMs and YM. We share some of the reservations of Peace and Social Order Committee. The proposal needs and is going through a process of refinement, hopefully to recognize a plurality of paths of Spirit.*

*Minutes of Concern can rise from to MM to YMs, but it is also valuable if YM generates and can share concerns with MMs. Issues may rise up which need a timely response. A concern with time sensitivity, for example about Standing Rock, calls for allowing Spirit a direct process. In that YMs are much larger, it is more valued as a Quaker voice in the outer world.*

*There is a need to respond in a timely fashion to shared statements from other Quaker organizations like FCNL, Quaker Peace Teams, QEW, or AFSC which sometimes ask us to use our Quaker voice and/or sign-on to a shared statement.*

*At times, from other YMs or world Friends come issues that no one of us sees in the same way or thinks of locally. We need to listen for what isn't being said among us that we may want to say. We need to continue to be open.*

*Truth needs to be timely."*

4 – Budget Issues and the Number of QEW Reps

In June, QEW established a new guideline asking each YM to send one or two Reps to sit on the 'Steering Committee'. We continued to have budget struggles both to fund our Reps to QEW and with our committee line item budget which was much too low for both paying for our conference calls and paying travel expenses for our once a year in-person meeting. We had to ask for an augmentation for

the committee's budget at Representatives Committee in March which was thankfully approved. **UwN has asked for \$750 for the UwN Committee line item budget for FY 2017-2018 which we believe will cover our bare bones necessary expenses.** I hope this can be settled reasonably so that the next clerk doesn't have the headaches I've had about our line item budget shortfalls.

#### The Ongoing Budget Issue with QEW Reps

Traditionally, two Representatives, appointed by UwN have been sent to the twice yearly QEW conferences/ steering committee [SC] meetings. This year there were two Reps who went to both conferences and one Rep who went to the Spring one in Atlanta. We appointed an extra Rep this year (at that time allowed by QEW) – first Meagan Fisher of Chico Meeting who was unable to serve and then Andi MacLeod of La Jolla Meeting who went to Atlanta. We appointed the extra Rep in order to support new younger Friends to become involved in QEW and Earthcare leadership positions. The five trips were only partially funded by PYM.

The QEW Reps travel budget has dropped somewhat from what it was at its peak and now at \$2200 would only cover about 2.75 people trips per year rather than 4 which translates into one Rep per conference. We were able to support five trips this year because one of the Reps, Rick Herbert, paid almost all of his own expenses to both SCs, because I received very generous support from the traveling ministry fund from my home meeting, Strawberry Creek, and because we were able to use, due to rare circumstances, PYM leftover funds from FY15-16.

The concatenation of this year's fortunate circumstances won't continue. At the time of this writing, we don't yet know what Finance Committee will propose and plenary will approve. UwN has asked Finance Committee for \$3300 for the QEW Reps travel budget to fully fund two Reps for the two conferences. It is expected that Finance committee will again propose the \$2200 budget for the QEW Reps travel. That means PYM will only be funding 1.37 Reps to QEW, which really means just sending one Rep. Just one QEW Rep would still serve PYM's basic need in being represented to and receiving representations from QEW.

5 – What else is UwN doing at Annual Session? Besides sponsoring the interest group for Friends and Meetings to share their testimonies to earth care and sustainability (see announcement #3 above), UwN will hopefully have free literature from QEW at the exhibition/tabling room. Also, UwN is convening the early morning Worship outdoors in Nature in a new location – in front of Pine lodge and in back of Cypress lodge. We think the new quieter location will support a more centered down Worship.

I'm stepping down after serving four years -two as clerk and two as co-clerk of Unity with Nature. It has been a privilege to serve PYM and Unity with Nature and hopefully further support our earth care testimony's ongoing unfoldment. May Nature heal us. May we restore Nature. May we live harmoniously with all Life on earth, our home.

In gratitude,

Catya de Neergaard  
Outgoing clerk, Unity with Nature Committee