

Reflections on Traveling in the Ministry to Australia Yearly Meeting in June-August 2016

**...a work in progress...
as of 15 July 2017**

Compiled by Alyssa Nelson, PYM Youth Programs Coordinator
with contributions from Sally Kingsland, Cathy Walling, and Thistle West
for PYM Annual Session, July 2017

A supplement to the YPCC Report to PYM Annual Session 2017:

https://www.pacificyearlymeeting.org/annual-session-minutes-reports/2017-annual-session-reports-and-minutes/#Youth_Programs_Coordinating_Committee_YP_Coordinator



Portions of this report are under development, particularly highlighted sections.

TABLE OF CONTENTS - *Click to jump to section (in electronic version)*

[Overview](#)

[Letter of Invitation to Alyssa from AYM Presiding Clerk](#)

[Endorsement of Alyssa's Travel Minute, from Jenny Turton, Former AYM Children and JYF Coordinator](#)

[Reflections from Alyssa](#)

[Reflections from Thistle](#)

[Reflections from Cathy](#)

[Report to PYM from Cathy Walling, May 2017](#)

[Report to YPCC from Cathy Walling, May 2017](#)

[Reflections from Sally](#)

[Sally's Post-Trip Reflections](#)

[Sally's Article from March 2015 in The Australian Friend](#)

[Alyssa's Travel Minute & Endorsements](#)

[Thistle's Travel Minute & Endorsements](#)

[Cathy's Travel Minute & Endorsements](#)

[Timeline, Itinerary, and Trip Notes](#)

[Pre-trip:](#)

[PYM Annual Session:](#)

[Travel in Australia:](#)

[Post-trip:](#)

Overview

In June 2016, the day after Pacific Yearly Meeting (PYM) Annual Session ended, Alyssa Nelson, Thistle West, and Cathy Walling traveled to Australia at the invitation of Australia Yearly Meeting (AYM). We've received encouragement to write reports, articles, or other pieces for PYM and AYM about both the content and the process of our travelling in the ministry. As a start but by no means fully completed, this report compiles some reflections along with our travel minutes, endorsements of our travel minutes by AYM Friends, and a record of our itinerary and some trip notes.

In Australia, we met with individual and groups of Friends and committees; participated in Yearly Meeting sessions; led activities and presented to children, teens, and adults; had fellowship opportunities with Friends of all ages; and visited Silver Wattle Quaker Center. After three weeks, Cathy returned home, and Alyssa and Thistle visited Canberra Regional Meeting and Canberra Local Meeting and led a workshop there on "Becoming Adult Allies to Youth." Thistle returned home after Canberra, leaving Alyssa in the hands of AYM elders as Alyssa travelled to four more Regional Meetings --Victoria RM (Melbourne), Western Australia RM (Perth), Tasmania RM (Hobart), and New South Wales RM (Sydney)-- where she visited local meetings, led more workshops, met with more Friends and committees, and spent time as Friend in Residence at the only Friends School in Australia. All told, Alyssa spent eight weeks travelling in the ministry as an extension of her work as the Youth Programs Coordinator for PYM. Various AYM entities paid for the almost all of Alyssa's expenses and some of Thistle and Cathy's, while PYM paid the majority of the costs for Thistle and Cathy and continued to pay Alyssa's regular salary while she was travelling.

Some highlights of the reflections/reports and endorsements include (to be finalized once the compilation is complete and Alyssa's reflections are added): gratitude and appreciation.... learnings.... candid account of the difficulties that came as fallout from an incomplete discernment process around sending a young adult without sufficient clarity of roles and expectations

"The Truth that I have more fully lived into is that as Friends we must serve the Movement, not our institutions, and that we can answer only to God. I hope all Friends will read more about this important thinking in the latest (June 2017) Friends Journal in an article by Noah Merrill." - Sally

"If there were going to be two friends traveling with Ministry, we needed more eldering accompaniment support." - Cathy

"YPCC did not reach out to me to offer a clearness process so I could discern whether it was right for me to go, but I also know that were I in a more grounded place, I would have known that I couldn't make that kind of decision without asking Friends to help me discern whether my going were God's will." - Thistle

"I am very grateful to Alyssa for her tremendous contribution to intergenerational connection and youth support within AYM which her visit inspired and helped equip us with. I greatly valued getting to know her in person and sharing some of the highlights, challenges and priorities that we both found within our respective roles on opposite sides of the world. We were often surprised at how many similarities there were for us in our roles." - Jenny

"I am very grateful also to PYM in the support they gave in enabling Alyssa to come to Australia: in discerning that this was a leading; in paying her salary for 2 months while she was over here; in the financial support towards the expenses for herself, Cathy and Thistle; and in the support of Ministry and Oversight and Alyssa's support team in the lead up to, time here, and debriefing afterwards." - Jenny

"It was a great blessing for us to hear of Thistle's experiences growing up within PYM and to be inspired by Thistle's contributions to their meeting through involvement in committees, planning and running youth events, and support to Alyssa. Meeting and hearing from a committed and involved Young Adult Friend demonstrated to AYM (and inspired both young and older Friends) what youth and young adult involvement in their own programs might look like. Alyssa and Thistle co-presented a number of times, and they were very complementary to one another in the message they shared." - Jenny

"We are most fortunate to have the quiet eldering presence of Cathy Walling with us a Australia Yearly Meeting 2-9 July 2016 in Hobart, Tasmania. We have learned much over the last four years of her visits regarding the value of the still presence at our meetings." - AYM Presiding Clerk

"Cathy's qualities of gentleness, curiosity, care and humour all part of her gift for eldering have been a precious contribution to us all. She has shared rituals and practices for winter, enjoyed the landscape, set fires and shared in conversations, laughter and times of deep spiritual connections." - Director, Silver Wattle Quaker Centre

"We hope your community benefits from the time you spend with Alyssa and that we and the wider body of Friends are also enriched as a result. We entrust Alyssa to your care and look forward hearing how Spirit is moving among you and to reading your words of endorsement upon her return." - Diego Navarro, PYM Presiding Clerk

Purpose of the trip: The initial invitation from AYM requested Alyssa to share her "expertise and gifts in working with children and teenagers, particularly in the development of programs that assist the transition of teenagers through Junior Young Friends," which she did at Australia Yearly Meeting and as she travelled among Friends in local and regional meetings around the country. Alyssa asked for the opportunity in return to learn about AYM's work on First Nations' Peoples' Concerns, about which AYM has a standing committee (FNPCC) and Friends who take action on this issue around the country. For example, in addition to participating in such activities during Yearly Meeting and meeting with concerned Friends and the FNPCC members, Alyssa (and in part Thistle and Cathy when present) visited the [Aboriginal Tent Embassy](#) in the nation's capital (Canberra), attended a [NAIDOC week](#) fundraiser for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander victims of domestic abuse, joined in the long-standing weekly vigil for First Nations People's Rights with Friends in Melbourne, met with the founders of the [Dumbartung Aboriginal Corporation](#) near Perth, visited multiple museums and cultural centers, and collected related references and publications to bring home to PYM. Note also that the 2017 AYM Backhouse Lecturer (keynote) for AYM is David Carline, Friend and Kooma Elder. The March 2017 issue of *The Australian Friend* is focused on "Roads to Reconciliation": <http://australianfriend.org/articles/issue/1703-march-2017/>

As described in other sections below, the trip grew out of connections made by Sally Kingsland, a Friend originally from Australia YM now in PYM (Strawberry Creek MM). After spending some time on PYM's Junior Yearly Meeting Committee and sharing about her experiences with Friends back in Australia, Sally wrote an article for *The Australian Friend* in March 2015, "Supporting and Empowering our Teens and Youth." Out of these efforts came preliminary conversations with Jenny Turton,

then-Coordinator of Children and JYFs for AYM, who became Alyssa's main contact, co-planner, and host in AYM. Sally's article is available online included later in this report:

<http://australianfriend.org/supporting-and-empowering-our-teens-and-youth/>

A number of PYM Friends encouraged Alyssa to have an elder for spiritual accompaniment in the travel and the preparations leading up to the trip; Sally Kingsland suggested Cathy Walling from Fairbanks, Alaska, whom Alyssa happened to know from a previous connection when Alyssa had been invited as a resource person to help with the teen program at Alaska Friends Conference's 2011 Spring Retreat. The PYM Youth Programs Coordinating Committee (YPCC) provided funds for Cathy to attend PYM Annual Session 2016 before departing for Australia, with Cathy formally in the role of elder to Alyssa during Annual Session. Cathy's report, included below, details some of the key benefits of extending the eldering role to PYM Annual Session before embarking to Australia.

In discerning how to make the most of the opportunity that the AYM invitation provided, the PYM Youth Programs Coordinating Committee considered the possibility of finding one or two PYM young adults to accompany Alyssa, in the spirit of sharing from their experiences and/or learning about eldering and spiritual accompaniment; due to financial and time limitations, the YPCC settled on asking one and offered the opportunity to Thistle West, in whom the YPCC recognized gifts of both pastoral care (elderling) and ministry on topics of youth inclusion in the Religious Society of Friends, LGBTQ concerns, and other topics of communal importance to Friends. This compiled report includes reflections from all three travelers as well as Sally Kingsland about the challenges, outcomes, and lessons learned from what turned out to be a rocky implementation of an "apprentice eldership."

Follow-up after the trip has included a presentation by Alyssa at College Park Fall Quarterly Meeting; reflection times among Cathy, Thistle, Alyssa, and Sally; and conversations within the YPCC. Cathy is returning to elder for Alyssa at PYM Annual Session 2017, and Alyssa and Cathy will participate in an Interest Group panel there on "Spiritual Accompaniment: Experiences of Elderling and Being Eldered" organized by M&O. Thistle now serves on the eldering working group of M&O along with Sally.

In appreciation for the journey,

- **Sally Kingsland** (PYM & AYM / Strawberry Creek MM which meets on Ohlone land)
- **Alyssa Nelson** (PYM/Davis MM, meets on Patwin/Southern Wintun land), PYM Youth Programs Coordinator, August 2011-present.
- **Cathy Walling** (Alaska Friends Conference / Chena Ridge MM, meets on Athabascan land), Elder providing spiritual accompaniment in planning, travelling, and being present to midwife Ministry
- **Thistle West** (PYM/Strawberry Creek MM, meets on Ohlone land), grew up in PYM, Young Adult Friend at the time of this travel.

See also: "Quaker Light in Australia and New Zealand" (*Western Friend*, March/April 2017), by Margery Post Abbott and Carl Abbott, who also attended AYM in 2016 (Margery was the Backhouse Lecturer). Cathy, Thistle, Margery, and Alyssa all spent a few days resting afterward at Silver Wattle Quaker Centre. <https://westernfriend.org/article/quaker-light-australia-and-new-zealand>

Letter of Invitation to Alyssa from AYM Presiding Clerk

19 August 2015

Alyssa Nelson
Youth Worker
Pacific Yearly Meeting
USA

Dear Alyssa

It is my pleasure to write on behalf of Australian Friends to formally invite you to attend our Yearly Meeting 2016 in Hobart, Tasmania, from 2 to 9 July 2016.

I understand that you are already in communication with Jenny Turton, the Children & Junior Young Friends Coordinator for Australia Yearly Meeting, about the possibility of sharing your expertise and gifts in working with children and teenagers, particularly in the development of programs that assist the transition of teenagers through Junior Young Friends (12 to 18 year olds) to Young Friends (18 years and over).

Yearly Meeting 2016 will be held at The Friends' School in Hobart, Tasmania, from 2 to 9 July. Australia Yearly Meeting has set aside funds to pay for your return airfares from the US to Australia and will cover the costs of your registration, meals and accommodation at the Tower Motel close to The Friends' School during Yearly Meeting. Jenny Turton, with whom you will be working closely, will be accommodated at the same venue.

If you are able to extend your stay with us beyond the 9 July, Jenny, in conjunction with our Children & JYF Committee, will contact Regional Meetings about the possibility of them hosting you for visits post--Yearly Meeting.

In Friendship

Julian Robertson
Presiding Clerk, Australia Yearly Meeting

Endorsement of Alyssa's Travel Minute, from Jenny Turton, Former AYM Children and JYF Coordinator

Included here at this point in the compilation because Jenny's letter gives a good overview of the whole trip, its evolution and some of its fruits, and Cathy and Thistle's roles as well. See more Travel Minute Endorsements below in the last section along with Alyssa, Thistle, and Cathy's Travel Minutes.

Email From: Jenny Turton

Date: Tue, Sep 27, 2016

Subject: Alyssa Nelson's time in Australia

Dear Pacific Yearly Meeting Clerk

I apologise for this delay in contacting you about Alyssa Nelson's time with us within Australian Yearly Meeting. I wanted to wait until Alyssa had completed her entire time with us in Australia, at which point I was overseas in the UK, and we have only recently managed to have a Skype debrief session together.

As the former Children and Junior Young Friend Coordinator for Australian Yearly Meeting (I concluded in this role at the end of July) I worked closely with Alyssa over the past year and a half in planning her travel to Australia for our Australian Yearly Meeting in Hobart in July and to interested Regional Meetings (this ended up being 5 of our 7 RMs: Victorian Regional Meeting, Tasmanian Regional Meeting, New South Wales Regional Meeting, Canberra Regional Meeting and Western Australian Regional Meeting) and Friends School in Hobart (the only Quaker school in Australia).

I am grateful to Sally Kingsland, an Australian Friend who is now an active part of PYM, for having the leading and the understanding of our needs around supporting young people in AYM to suggest that Alyssa would have valuable skills to offer us in this area. It is thanks to Sally's vision that Alyssa's ministry to AYM was first set in motion. Sally had email communication and a Skype meeting with me initially, and put in a lot of time with Alyssa and her team in planning for the visit and providing Australian context and understanding.

Alyssa was very thorough in discerning with her team whether coming to Australia was a leading, and whether there would be mutual benefit to both AYM and PYM in her doing so, particularly given the length of time she ended up staying. Despite having a very busy role in PYM and many ongoing commitments, Alyssa was an extremely good communicator in moving the visit forward, and she was very generous of her time. She was very keen to tailor her visit to address AYM needs, and was open to extending her stay to enable as many Regional Meetings as possible to benefit from her time in Australia.

Alyssa and PYM felt that it would be useful for her to be accompanied by an Elder providing spiritual support and by a Young Friend. Cathy Walling from Alaska provided spiritual support for Alyssa during

her time prior to AYM, at AYM, and at Silver Wattle Quaker Centre immediately after YM. I was very grateful to know that Cathy was able to provide this much needed support to Alyssa during a very busy program at YM, and we benefited greatly from her warm and supportive approach and from her knowledge of Australian Quakers acquired during a long period of connection with Australia and AYM. Many Australian friends were thrilled to meet with Cathy again after attending her couples courses or through other connections. Thistle West from PYM, currently living in Ohio, was the Young Friend identified to accompany Alyssa. Thistle stayed on for Alyssa's time with Canberra Regional Meeting also, which was a great addition to Alyssa's offering. It was a great blessing for us to hear of Thistle's experiences growing up within PYM and to be inspired by Thistle's contributions to their meeting through involvement in committees, planning and running youth events, and support to Alyssa. Meeting and hearing from a committed and involved Young Adult Friend demonstrated to AYM (and inspired both young and older Friends) what youth and young adult involvement in their own programs might look like. Alyssa and Thistle co-presented a number of times, and they were very complementary to one another in the message they shared. I felt that Alyssa, Cathy and Thistle worked very well together as a team travelling in Ministry.

Alyssa's warm, outgoing nature and sense of humour made her very approachable to Australian Friends and very well received. She consistently (both at AYM and at RMs) offered above and beyond what I was expecting from her, putting herself forward for additional offerings to what we had initially discussed. At times I was concerned that she was giving too much of herself, which could lead to physical, mental, emotional and spiritual exhaustion. Having Elder support, through Cathy and then Australian Elders during her travels, hopefully gave her the spiritual support she needed for her offerings. Alyssa was certainly aware of times she needed some rest and quiet time, and was able to pull back when she really needed to. Her presentations and ongoing contributions at AYM certainly put adult support of young people in the spotlight, which is just what we were hoping would happen from her visit. She also shared skills which would help us in better doing so, in a fun and engaging way. She was able to make some valuable insights and contributions to our preparatory sessions for the Children and JYF Committee and Child Protection Committee, which I believe helped with ongoing support from AYM for the AYM Children and JYF Coordinator role.

Alyssa's visits to RMs and to Friends School were very well received. I participated in her workshop and session after Sunday Meeting for Worship in Melbourne as a member of Victorian Regional Meeting. These events were well attended, and Friends felt that they gained important skills and momentum for better creating intergenerational Quaker community and supporting young people and their families. There are some very important practical outcomes arising from this, including having a young person on our organising committee for our VRM residential weekend, and changing the way the weekend is run to better integrate young people into the main sessions.

It was also wonderful to have Alyssa visiting at a time that Wilma Davidson was taking over the Children and JYF Coordinator role from myself, as Wilma got to spend a lot of time with Alyssa at YM, the visit to CRM [Canberra Regional Meeting] where Wilma resides, and the visit to WARM [Western Australia Regional Meeting] which Wilma accompanied Alyssa to. It was a great opportunity for Wilma to gain insights from Alyssa and the discussion she generated with Australian Friends as Wilma settled into the role.

I sincerely hope that Alyssa, Cathy and Thistle benefited both individually and in their contribution to their own meetings from their time with AYM. I know that Alyssa spent quite a bit of time learning about Australian Quaker and indigenous connections, which was a personal concern of hers through her work with young Quaker and Native American people camps in PYM. She had informed us that this was something she wanted to gain from her travel to Australia, which myself and other Australian Friends were only too willing to help organise. I hope also that there will be an ongoing connection between Alyssa, Cathy and Thistle and AYM. I was thrilled that Alyssa's husband Roger was able to join her towards the end of her stay, meet with Australian Friends, and explore some of the beautiful places in Hobart, Melbourne and NSW [New South Wales].

I am very grateful to Alyssa for her tremendous contribution to intergenerational connection and youth support within AYM which her visit inspired and helped equip us with. I greatly valued getting to know her in person and sharing some of the highlights, challenges and priorities that we both found within our respective roles on opposite sides of the world. We were often surprised at how many similarities there were for us in our roles.

I am very grateful also to PYM in the support they gave in enabling Alyssa to come to Australia: in discerning that this was a leading; in paying her salary for 2 months while she was over here; in the financial support towards the expenses for herself, Cathy and Thistle; and in the support of Ministry and Oversight and Alyssa's support team in the lead up to, time here, and debriefing afterwards.

In sincere gratitude, peace and friendship,
Jenny Turton

Reflections from Alyssa

This section is under development.

I am presenting in two interest groups at PYM Annual Session 2017 (one about the trip in general, and one about the experience of travelling with an elder) and giving some reflections in Plenary and having some travel endorsements read. After Annual Session I expect to be able to put these in writing. For now, what's here is an outline of the activities and emergent themes.

- How mountains moved and Way opened for me to be able to go at that time
- Ministries
 - Youth / Community
 - Indigenous Peoples
- Professional development, multidirectional
- Spiritual development - personal, professional, RSOF-wide
- Learnings / offerings - youth programs
 - Workshop highlights, challenges, changes
 - CP
 - JYF
 - Summer Camp
 - YM Program
 - YF
 - Adults / Intergenerational
 - Prep and Business Meetings
 - The Friends School
 - Asked to share about competition: being an athlete and a Quaker
 - Geography class - QOF Camp FNPC
 - 5th Grade (FNPC)
 - 2nd Grade (google maps, cooperative games)
- Learnings / offerings - FNPC
 - AYM
 - Welcome to Country / Acknowledgement of Country
 - Highly visible signage and literature at Quaker properties acknowledging traditional caretakers of the land
 - Introducing selves with mention of on whose land one's local meeting meets or where one was born or lives
 - QOF Spring Camp
- Learnings - Travelling in the ministry and spiritual accompaniment
 - Benefit of elder at PYM
 - Cathy returning this year

- Benefit of elder at AYM / Australia
- Benefit of another voice from PYM (Thistle)
 - Challenges / lack of discernment (complement to what Cathy and Thistle already wrote) -- YPCC didn't offer discernment
- Staying with Friends in their homes, etc. / hospitality
- Learnings - RSOF
- Thoughts about future possibilities
- Thanks

Reflections from Thistle

I think the other reports included in this document (particularly Cathy's) have already included a great deal of what I would want to share about my experience—both the hard pieces and the incredible richness and sweetness of our time in Australia. While I made many wonderful connections and enjoyed engaging with the Young Friends community at AYM, I want to use this space to reflect on the structural pieces that made things difficult for me. My hope is that sharing my experience will shed light on how to make similar situations flow more smoothly in the future.

When Alyssa reached out to me in the Spring of 2016 to ask if I would be interested in coming to Australia, I was attending Oberlin College in Ohio. At the time I felt isolated and disconnected from my spiritual home in Pacific Yearly Meeting and was thrilled that Friends back home saw me as someone who could be right for this role (although even then I wasn't entirely clear on what the role was). YPCC did not reach out to me to offer a clearness process so I could discern whether it was right for me to go, but I also know that were I in a more grounded place, I would have known that I couldn't make that kind of decision without asking Friends to help me discern whether my going were God's will.

The role was described to me as “apprentice eldering,” which I took to mean assisting Cathy in accompanying Alyssa and supporting the ministry that came through her. However, I was also invited to share experientially about growing up in PYM and my experiences with youth programs, teen leadership roles, and the Young Adult Friends group—bringing my own ministry to Australian Friends. On our planning calls with Alyssa, Cathy, and once with Jenny Turton, it was clear that everyone had been carrying this vision far longer than I had, and I often found myself wondering about too many different pieces to even know where to begin asking questions. At that time I felt profoundly out of the loop, which I later understood was because Cathy and Alyssa had already gone through a yoking process as elder and minister. Their relationship was already established and I had no idea where I fit into it. From experience I have since learned that if two people are to share the role of eldering for a piece of ministry, the two of them need to yoke together first before beginning their work with the minister. But at the time we were preparing for the trip, I barely knew Cathy and felt totally outside the bond she and Alyssa had already spent months creating.

This feeling of being an outsider/not understanding my place persisted at PYM's Annual Session, the week before we left for Australia. Cathy accompanied Alyssa throughout the week, and I was included in very few of their check ins (mostly the result of miscommunication). I had never spent time with Cathy one-on-one until close to the end of AS, and when we went on a walk together, I quickly found myself sobbing. We were both surprised by the wave of feelings, questions and doubts that spilled out of me, everything that had felt too abstract and overwhelming to know how to articulate over planning calls or even to myself.

I felt lost and out of my depth, that PYM was asking me to do very hard work I hadn't been prepared for, and hadn't given me any support structure. I had spent a lot of AS in prayer, but had had difficulty connecting to the divine. I found myself asking God all kinds of questions without being able to feel any

response. Why had I been called to do this? Was my going to Australia truly Spirit led? Was I in a place to be able to tell? Was there anyone who could support me or help me feel less alone? What if there was ministry within it, but there wouldn't be the space or care to draw it forth? I felt angry, scared, and alone.

Because I had not been through a clearness process, and the pieces of experiential ministry I was carrying did not have as much support as they could have used, much of my time in Australia was painful, and that was frequently draining to the Friends I travelled with. Dealing with my confusion and angst over my lack of a clear role took away energy from both Cathy and Alyssa that could have been channelled into carrying Alyssa's ministry and stifled the ministry within me.

I am aware that my presence had positive impacts on many Friends I engaged with, and I am grateful for all of the learning that took place (it will most likely take me years to fully understand). Some Friends, including Sally, Jenny, and Elaine, provided incredible support to me in the midst of some of the hardest time. I trust God that there were reasons beyond my understanding for my travelling to Australia.

Reflections from Cathy

Report to PYM from Cathy Walling, May 2017

Dear Pacific Yearly Meeting Friends,

What a gift and blessing it has been to spiritually accompany Alyssa Nelson and Thistle West on their travels in the ministry with Australian Friends in July 2016. My work with Alyssa began over a year prior to our traveling together. Thistle joined our travel planning in April 2016 on the recommendation of the Youth Programs Coordinating Committee (YPCC). An accompanying report to the YPCC committee speaks more to that aspect of the experience.

In May 2015, after receiving the invitation to spiritually accompany Alyssa for a Travel in the Ministry to Australia and discerning the “Rightness and Ripeness” of this invitation with my anchor committee, Alyssa and I began regularly meeting via Skype and phone, and we were also able to meet in person three times when I was in California for other spiritual work.

There is much that could be said about the importance of this preparation phase in assisting the three of us in spiritually yoking in this work, yet I will focus this report on the “on the ground aspects” of our time together at Pacific Yearly Meeting’s (PYM) annual session and immediately before and during our travel to Australia.

Attending Pacific Yearly Meeting’s Annual Session

Attending PYM’s annual session just prior to our departure for Australia proved an integral aspect of my accompanying Alyssa. The fruits of this were multi-faceted:

1. I was the “on the ground” spiritually accompanying Alyssa at PYM’s annual session and getting to support her faithful service as the PYM Youth Programs Coordinator while also supporting her in not “over giving” during annual session to save energy for the upcoming extensive traveling in the Ministry yet to come. Seeing Alyssa’s work and the PYM community first hand prepared me to better accompany Alyssa in travelling beyond her own yearly meeting.
2. Just prior to the PYM annual session, I also accompanied Alyssa to the final overnight of the PYM Young Adult Friends (YAFs) Retreat and then attended the YAFs’ first business meeting at annual session. This opportunity felt particularly precious to me, as I probably wouldn’t have otherwise gotten to be a part of such gatherings and LOVED my opportunities to get to know, support, and receive blessing from various members of the YAF community!
3. I was invited into many sacred spaces and opportunities to uphold Alyssa “doing her job” for the yearly meeting. One big component of this was to get to see many of the more hidden aspects of Alyssa’s work and to name and affirm them for Alyssa: yes, they matter, even if not seen or

known publically. (Often, important Spiritual work occurs below the “public awareness level”, yet is vital!)

4. By eldering for Alyssa during PYM, I was also able to spiritually listen for important pieces to bring to Australia Yearly Meeting (AYM), pieces Alyssa might not be aware of, in particular the “more” of what might be called forth. One huge example was eldering for Alyssa’s PYM Interest Group session on the spring camp at Quaker Oaks Farm with Quaker and Wukchumni Youth, a presentation titled “Native+Quaker Spring Youth Service-Learning Camp on the Land” that she had also presented at a professional Geography conference earlier in 2016. It turned out that later, during Australia Yearly Meeting (AYM), Alyssa would also share this ministry in a “share-n-tell” session as well as in a special program with the Junior Young Friends (JYFs, age group is 12-17). In addition, Alyssa attended an AYM Winter School session on First Nations Concerns to learn and found she could also contribute from her experiences within PYM.
5. I was particularly blessed by the opportunity to Spiritually accompany Alyssa for a forgiveness, healing and reconciliation gathering during the PYM week, and felt and named the sacramental nature of such work in community!
6. I was present for various times when Alyssa was “spiritually accompanying” individual young Friends during PYM annual session, nurturing, affirming and supporting their Spiritual growth and development and specifically their next steps on their own spiritual journey. (The truth is, we all are invited into this work in our spiritual community. That said, having someone specifically named and affirmed into it, and in the case of Pacific Yearly Meeting also financially compensated to do it, further supports these gifts in being exercised and rightly used!)
7. Another particularly sweet and perhaps unexpected moment at PYM was accompanying Alyssa when she worked with the PYM Treasurer in matters of budget, finances, etc. The tending of monetary gifts as a spiritual practice was very evident as these two gathered and shared. What would our world be like if we all tended this resource from a Spiritually grounded place?

Travels in Australia with Alyssa and Thistle including attending Australia Yearly Meeting:

Alyssa and Thistle were able to speak experientially from different vantage points with Australian Friends about Youth Programming, Intergenerational sensibilities and Alyssa’s work as the Youth Programs Coordinator of Pacific Yearly Meeting. Having Thistle present to share and speak experientially from their lived experience of growing up in PYM --and as a current young adult and Friend-- was a huge gift.

One particular highlight for me was eldering the Junior Young Friends (JYF 12-17 age group) session that Alyssa and Thistle co-led. The night before, Alyssa had put together a PowerPoint presentation with Thistle’s consulting assistance. Thistle speaking from lived experience as a Friend close in age to them made a palpable difference! After this graced session, Jenny Turton, the AYM Children and JYFs Coordinator, exclaimed how her hopes and expectations of our visit had already been far exceeded!!

In addition to the formal JYF presentation, Alyssa also presented the following at AYM:

1. A Winter School session on “Becoming Adult Allies to Youth”
2. Children’s Education PowerPoint presentation co-led with Thistle, with pictures of PYM and AYM children and intergenerational community that prompted storytelling and questions and answers

3. AYM Children/JYF Child Protection Prep Session (PowerPoint presentation, “Healing & Co-Creating Vibrant Intergenerational Community,” including brief description of PYM youth programs and photos from PYM sessions, emphasizing lessons learned in the evolution of PYM’s approach of having a paid coordinator who works with both youth and adults as a resource person more than a program leader, an involved coordinating/supervisory committee, and both all-ages and age-based activities)
4. The share-n-Tell session “Native+Quaker Spring Youth Service-Learning Camp on the Land” (using the same prepared PowerPoint shared during PYM)
5. Sharing the “Native+Quaker Spring Youth Service-Learning Camp on the Land” presentation with the JYFs.

As the week progressed, more and more Australian Friends noticed the wonderful Spiritual Gifts Alyssa and Thistle could offer, had opportunities to get to know them personally, and called upon them to present and speak on more occasions.

One particularly rich opportunity arose when Alyssa was invited to join a few friends after the JYF-Children’s preparatory session to consider a seeming impasse blocking unity on a proposed new policy, recognizing she may have gifts to offer. Alyssa ministered privately to the preparatory session clerks; then the next day she met privately with them again and with the person who had struggled during the preparatory session; finally during the formal session Alyssa was called into public ministry, posing a query that reframed the specific controversy as part of a larger question about “How do Friends help Friends through the various transitions of life?” In this case, the gift of the Traveling Minister who is not a member of the local community was called into Rightful service for the gathered community’s benefit.

Each of us participated in various personal “opportunities” with different Friends throughout the week. Specifically, Thistle plugged in with the AYM Young Friends (18-35ish) gatherings in addition to many one-on-ones. Again, having this intergenerational Traveling Ministry contribution to our travels was a total gift to Aussie Friends!

In addition, we observed several Junior Young Friends (JYF) and Children’s Program activities:

- JYF parent orientation meeting
- Children Godly Play offered by Jenny
- Children storytelling session about indigenous place names, the power of words, and the power-implications of who gets to decide official names
- Children’s whole-body mandala making
- Children’s natural building creative effort
- Lunch and informal conversation with JYFs, with topics arising such as current events, voting, politics, and the possibility of a unified stand on abortion

Ideas we want to bring back from AYM. Please ask Alyssa and Thistle more about these:

1. “Penn Friends” (formally-organized child and adult pen-pal relationships from different Meetings)
2. The children’s program was all ages together (0-11 years), not separate groups

3. During the formal session on First Nations Peoples' Concerns, one action item named was to introduce oneself with not only one's home Meeting but also whose land one lives or meets on... After this invitation, more and more Friends did so the rest of the week.
4. The help desk and the room/space it was in and how it was set up worked well, like a cross roads of a trading route
5. The silent worship 'Epilogue' at the end of every evening.
6. The midweek open time for getting out and exploring the surrounding area, including the opportunity to view a film about Friends involved in nonviolent civil disobedience, shown at a local theater and open to the public
7. The clear distinguishing between preparatory and formal sessions.
8. Prep sessions were clearly named for the topic each would tend to
9. The presiding clerk led the welcoming orientation offered for newcomers
10. A "Welcome to Country" was a given by a local indigenous person in the opening session, and "Acknowledgements of Country" were given throughout the week.
11. The named and intentional eldering of all sessions by Friends selected/asked to do so
12. Formal "pastoral carers" as listening presences
13. Closed sessions for elders and pastoral carers
14. The Standing Committee (similar to PYM Representative Committee) gathered to do its final preparatory work in the days just prior to yearly meeting, coming to annual session with "hearts and minds prepared"
15. Formal morning and afternoon tea every day provided important informal connection opportunities during these social times.

Also be sure to ask Alyssa and Thistle about their experiences after AYM, including visiting Silver Wattle Quaker Center and facilitating a "Becoming Adult Allies to Youth" workshop at a Regional Meeting. Alyssa continued on several more weeks after I, then Thistle, returned home, visiting four more Regional Meetings and offering the Adult Allies workshop three more times!

It is very challenging to convey the immense richness I experienced in accompanying Alyssa during PYM, and my three weeks traveling in the ministry with Alyssa and Thistle in Australia. I hope this report captures the Spirit of it and inspires each of you and PYM as a whole to step forward in faith with the ways you are being called into faithful service in our world.

With continuing gratitude and blessing,

Cathy Walling

Member Chena Ridge Friends Meeting, Alaska Friends Conference

Report to YPCC from Cathy Walling, May 2017

“With the gift of 20/20 hindsight.... What are the available learnings?”

-- Please read the general report to Pacific Yearly Meeting prior to reading this report.

Dear Friends,

Finally presented with the opportunity to Spiritually reflect upon a report to this committee, I hold a bundle of joy and gratitude for the opportunity to Travel in the Ministry to Australia with Alyssa Nelson and Thistle West in June-July 2016.

While there is much to celebrate from those travels and being rightly used by God/Spirit --which is conveyed in a separate report to Pacific Yearly Meeting (PYM)-- there is also an opportunity to reflect upon an important learning and the need for forgiveness and healing of a tear in the fabric of Spiritual Community. This report to YPCC will focus on the “learning invitation” offered to all of us.

The basic issue was, I didn’t realize that Thistle hadn’t gone through a thorough, intentional process to spiritually discern their “rightness and ripeness” for stepping into the Traveling Ministry experience in the function of an “apprentice elder.” I didn’t learn this until Thistle specifically told me near the end of PYM Annual Session, a couple days before we were to depart for Australia. From my perspective, this lack of explicit and intentional spiritual discernment added stress to our journey in Australia.

Shortly after arriving in Australia, I was saddened and concerned when I heard Thistle say, “I didn’t know what I was saying yes to.” My understanding was that the YPCC had discerned that Thistle possessed gifts of eldering and would be coming in the function of “apprentice elder.” I was further surprised when Thistle later mentioned, “I have no juice for an eldering apprenticeship. Offering ministry has more life for me!”

I knew I did not have capacity to accompany two traveling ministers, and it was challenging to notice Thistle’s anxiety in this situation and not be able to give it the attention it needed. As a result, at times we experienced tension among the three of us. I also felt sad that Thistle didn’t feel supported in their ministry at times. **If there were going to be two friends traveling with Ministry, we needed more eldering accompaniment support.**

I have experienced a similar situation in a previous traveling ministry trip. In similar fashion, I think other Friends noticed big Spiritual gifts in a young adult Friend and, well-meaningly, invited them into an apprentice eldering opportunity without fully engaging the young adult to discern with them whether or not they had “spiritual juice” for this invitation and whether it was “right and ripe” for them to step forward into it. In both cases, these gifted Young Adult Friends didn’t actually have “life” for what the others had thought would be a rich opportunity for them and for the community. Without intentional Spiritual discernment they ended up feeling unsupported, and a “mismatch” of their Spiritual juice did not align with what they had been asked to do. In cases like this in which other Friends making these

decisions are older than the Young Adult Friend, I wonder if there might be a blind spot in the power dynamic?

I do think a brief discernment time with Australia Yearly Meeting's Children and Junior Young Friends Coordinator, Jenny Turton, was helpful in drawing out a focus of Ministry from Thistle. Jenny offered these Queries for Thistle: "Why have you chosen to be more involved in the Life of your Meeting? Why is it enriching for you? What have been the benefits?" I think Thistle received some good spiritual grounding support from Jenny and some other Australian Friends and did experience many rich opportunities with individuals, both Young Adult Friends and Older Adult Friends, as well as teens and children.

It's been my hope and prayer all along with this "hard piece" that Thistle, Alyssa, and I are all able to grow in more Spiritual Understanding and wisdom from it all. While hard and painful at times, with the gift of hindsight and maybe more time, I believe Thistle especially will draw much from this experience and be able to speak powerfully from experiential knowing!

In equal measure, it's my hope and prayer that the Youth Programs Coordinating Committee and Pacific Yearly Meeting as a whole are able to grow in more Spiritual understanding and wisdom around the importance of spiritual discernment of eldering and ministry gifts from it all.

And finally, I pray that any unhealed hurts between Alyssa and Thistle experience forgiveness, healing and reconciliation. (My understanding is Alyssa and Thistle recently had an opportunity to gather together and have experienced a forgiveness and healing opportunity together! Halleluiah!)

This was another HUGE traveling Ministry adventure that PYM supported. It was filled with many wonderful and spiritually powerful times. The discernment issue raised here is a small bump in the road of an otherwise rich and wonderful journey. I pray that the fruits from this Spirit Led service be experienced by PYM and AYM (and Alaska Friends Conference, too) for years to come!

With Love and in Service,

Cathy Walling
Chena Ridge Friends Meeting, Alaska Friends Conference

Reflections from Sally

Sally's Post-Trip Reflections

What continues to move me about the experience of being part of the movement of Spirit that led to Alyssa's (and thereby Thistle and Cathy's) trip to Australia is how we do not, indeed cannot, ever know the full results of our actions, we can only be faithful to each little step that God invites us to. In this case, a connecting thread through time was apparent to me and I was grateful for that opportunity and education in the way of Spirit. I will briefly describe the thread that I perceived - a thread that has no beginning but the Love of God and no end but the Love of God. It is not all my story, except that it is, our human story is interconnected and it is at our peril that we forget that.

We will pick up this story 15 years ago when Jan Hoffman called out Cathy's gifts in eldering. When Cathy visited Australia with her family a few years later they thought to look up Quakers and visit Yearly Meeting which, having been such a wonderful time, resulted in them returning the following year to attend a whole Yearly Meeting. It was during the first visit in 2006 that Cathy asked herself, where are the Elders? The following year she was able to have conversations with some Australian Friends about the question of where the Elders were, it was also the year that she and I met. Conversations continued over the next year between Cathy and the Australian Friends about Eldering and resulted in Cathy returning to Australia Yearly Meeting again the very next year (2008) with Elaine Emily - someone who could teach about Eldering. You can read about Elaine and Cathy's first trip to Australia together in Pendle Hill Pamphlet #428 *Spiritual Accompaniment: An Experience of Two Friends Traveling in the Ministry*.

Fast forward another few years and we find Elaine and Cathy on another trip to Australia to teach about Eldering including a workshop called *Midwives of the Spirit* at the nascent Australian Quaker Center "Silver Wattle". I attended that week-long workshop with my 6 month old daughter because I would do anything to spend a week with these two wonderful Friends! Well, I had a shock on the first evening when I realised that I was also there because I had gifts in eldering and they were well and truly called out that week. This was a significant turn on my spiritual path where I moved from an almost exclusive focus on personal healing to one that started to include elements of service. One of the results of that week at Silver Wattle was that I was soon asked to start regular eldering and spiritual accompaniment for a weighty Friend.

A year or two later Spirit was moving me and way opened for my family and me to move to California. I knew I needed to come to the USA to sit at the feet of great Quakers to learn my faith and practice. Through their faithful service Elaine and Cathy had helped me to see that I needed more than I could access from Australia. So, my family and I left our beloved homeland and moved to the USA - not where I would have chosen but where we needed to be. The deal was that my husband would earn enough money for our family so that I was freed up to work in service and to learn. I spoke about that leading during a plenary at Pacific Yearly Meeting 2014.

As soon as I got here Spirit started working me hard and fast and my spiritual, emotional and physical health continued to improve dramatically as I continued to say "yes" to the Divine and let the rest go. I continued to do healing and growing work that was transformative. I was soon called into service for Pacific Yearly Meeting and was nominated to the Ministry and Oversight Committee. By the time I got to this my healing journey was ending its secondary phase. Inner healing was no longer a primary focus of my life and my capacity to serve had increased enormously. I was no longer using human energy to do work (which might have been well intentioned but ultimately not very effective) but God's energy (which is grace-filled, always amazing and much more powerful).

While in California I have maintained links to my Australian community, sometimes through group emails and sometimes with calls to individuals. By being in California I was learning a lot about different ways to do things as a Quaker and going to my first Annual Session of Pacific Yearly Meeting was just wonderful. I went there with my two young children and was able to participate in the sessions because of the well-organised and staffed children's program. This was very different to my experience of Yearly Meeting in Australia. I was so impressed by the way the teens and young adults behaved and how my whole family and I were warmly welcomed into the young adult community. This again was a contrast to what I had witnessed and experienced in Australia. I could not help notice the differences and to long for Australian Friends to know more so I wrote an article for the Australian Friend about the Pacific Yearly Meeting teen program (see below). I had also been in contact with the new children's coordinator in Australia, Jenny Turton, and had been surprised and delighted how receptive she was to my contacting her and to my ideas about children and teen programs. One thing led to another and I told her about how amazing Alyssa was - Alyssa was now a new Friend of mine with us having bonded briefly at my first YM around a shared passion for justice for First Nations peoples - and I said to Jenny that I thought it would be greatly beneficial if it would ever be possible for Australia Yearly Meeting to invite Alyssa to visit. I had no idea Jenny would get onto that so quickly! It was not long before the Aussies and Alyssa were in discernment about exactly that!

It is interesting to me that it did not occur to me for a while that Cathy Walling would be a perfect person to accompany Alyssa in travelling to Australia. And when it did, I was clear that I was not being asked to do anything about it. And then Spirit nudged me and said call - so I did, and Cathy was so excited. I remember the moment very clearly. The rest of that part, as they say, is history and way opened for Cathy to go to Australia with Alyssa (and it turned out that Cathy and Alyssa already knew each other). But not only that, in order for it to happen with the Yearly Meetings so close in time, it made the most sense for Cathy to come and Elder for Alyssa at Pacific Yearly Meeting, too.

Seven months prior to the Australia trip Cathy, Alyssa, Elaine and I had the opportunity to spend several hours together in worship and sharing around the journey we had been on, separately and collectively, that had led to where we were with the exciting travel to come the following year. It was around that time that I felt that my part in the organisation of the trip was largely done and I had to let go of any expectations or control over what happened.

When I first heard that a young person was also going to be invited to go to Australia with Alyssa in an apprentice role I was enthusiastic but cautious. I was concerned because I had witnessed a situation previously which involved a younger Friend in an apprentice Elder role and it had resulted in a lot of

hurt and frustration. I wrote a response to Alyssa, Cathy and Jim Summers (Youth Programs Coordinating Committee Clerk at the time) and noted that Cathy also knew this history. I cautioned Alyssa and the YPCC to proceed with caution, to select the young person very carefully and to plan their inclusion with care, including having backup plans in case things did not go well. It then took some time before Thistle was selected and I was relieved they had found someone who was spiritually mature. Although a good friend of mine, Thistle was living in another state and we were both very busy so we did not discuss the trip much beyond a few text messages. There was only a matter of months between Thistle being named and the trip happening.

During the time that Thistle was in Australia with Alyssa and Cathy I supported Thistle with quite a few text messages and a phone call when things got tough. Everyone involved knew that Thistle was reaching out to me and I was more than happy to support as best I could from this end. I started to see the situation Thistle had dropped into more clearly and am glad for the honest reports being shared about the experience. I also debriefed with both Thistle and Alyssa after the trip.

There was a point in the discernment process when Pacific Yearly Meeting, through the Youth Programs Coordinating Committee, was seriously considering whether or not to allow Alyssa to go, partly because of the thought that Pacific Yearly Meeting would bear some significant financial and time cost to benefit another Yearly Meeting. I was quick to point out that it was partly through Pacific Yearly Meeting supporting Elaine to travel in the ministry to Australia that I had, in turn, come to California and was dedicating most of my child-free hours to Pacific Yearly Meeting. If they wanted to do a cost-benefit analysis I was pretty sure that there was a serious case to be made for sharing resources with others! The Truth that I have more fully lived into is that as Friends we must serve the Movement, not our institutions, and that we can answer only to God. I hope all Friends will read more about this important thinking in the latest (June 2017) *Friends Journal* in an article by Noah Merrill.

As far as I understood the situation, part of the motivation of YPCC in sending a young apprentice Elder was to make the most of the resources they were investing in an Elder for Alyssa. Although Cathy covered some of her own costs, Pacific Yearly Meeting did pay for some also (via the Youth Programs Fund / Bob Vogel Endowment) and they wanted to see a direct benefit to developing a youth from within Pacific Yearly Meeting. I now wonder to what extent financial concerns and motivations, combined with a general lack of experiential understanding of Eldering within Pacific Yearly Meeting, contributed to the difficult situation that the three travellers ended up in. I now regret not having paid more attention to this situation as it developed, particularly with regard to care for the apprentice Elder. I was surprised and sad after the travel had happened to learn that Thistle had not been involved much with Cathy and Alyssa at Pacific Yearly Meeting's Annual Session right before they left for Australia. The Minister-Elder bond had been formed over a long time between Alyssa and Cathy and it was, with the benefit of hindsight, a huge ask to have someone, a youth no less, step in and comfortably find a place within that existing relationship.

And so I wonder where this all goes next and of course we will never know, even if we catch a few glimpses. As we walk faithfully we are always sowing seeds as we walk and many will sprout, even if not for a long time. One that I saw sprout already was when I recently heard someone associated with the PYM Junior Yearly Meeting program say that they wanted to find an Elder to accompany them at the upcoming (2017) Pacific Yearly Meeting Annual Session. They had witnessed the enormous

difference it made to Alyssa to have been accompanied by Cathy the year before and wanted some of what she had! Allelujah! This was a beautiful thing to have heard - Friends were experiencing the benefits of eldering and wanted more! I am now working with the Eldering Working Group of Pacific Yearly Meeting Ministry and Oversight Committee and was able to link the person wanting an Elder into the process we already had underway. The JYM person who expressed interest now has a Friend assigned to them for spiritual accompaniment during Annual Session, as do around eight other people working in jobs that are particularly demanding during Annual Session. I have no doubt that many more seeds will sprout and the threads of connectivity will continue to spread as we walk forward.

I am enormously grateful to Alyssa, Thistle and Cathy, and all who made it possible for them to travel, for the great gift I believe they brought Australia Yearly Meeting and Pacific Yearly Meeting. I believe that through their faithful service they have planted many seeds and brought a bouquet of ministry forth.

We are all living in this ongoing living stream and our purpose is to align with where Spirit is leading us and longing for us to be. I give thanks for the opportunity to serve in the way I was given and for the faithfulness in all who were involved.

Sally's Article from March 2015 in *The Australian Friend*

Reprinted with permission from the author and the publisher. Note that at the time of writing this article, Sally's membership had not yet transferred from her AYM local meeting (Canberra) to her PYM one.

[Supporting and Empowering Our Teens and Youth](http://australianfriend.org/supporting-and-empowering-our-teens-and-youth/)

<http://australianfriend.org/supporting-and-empowering-our-teens-and-youth/>

Sally Kingsland, Canberra Regional Meeting



The place of young people in our Australian Quaker community has been of great interest, and some concern, to me for many years. It has been a question of direct personal relevance as I have journeyed as a committed spiritual seeker, a faithful member of my local Meeting and as a Young Friend.

The critical importance of children and youth to our Society has been elaborated various times recently including in Tracy Bourne's Backhouse Lecture (2014) and the Young Friends' Backhouse Lecture (2010) of which I was one of the authors. It is very clear to me that the revitalisation of our Society, that so many people long for (and express in many different ways), must have young people at its core. Many Friends seem to despair about this possibility; I do not. We must, however, both support our young people and renew our faith and practice.

In this article I am going to address only the first point – how to support young people in our Society, particularly the teens. I have been concerned for many years that the current system in Australia is not optimal and, since moving to the USA, I have been able to experience a different way of doing things that I believe is better for everyone in the community.

Here in Pacific Yearly Meeting, which includes Friends from California, Mexico, Hawaii and Guatemala, a program is available for teens aged 13-18 years. However, it is not just provided for them; the teens, through their own leadership structures, are equal partners in running the program. Their program is called Junior Yearly Meeting (JYM) and has its own clerks, ministry and oversight committee and so on. The teen leadership team, usually comprised of older teens who have some previous experience in the program, works with an adult support committee to organise their own program within Yearly Meeting. Teens have real responsibility including, for example, clerking the planning meetings at which both teens and the adult support committee are present.

Many of the adults on the JYM (teen) support committee are Young Adult Friends (YAFs). YAFs here are aged 18–35ish. Like Australian Young Friends, they provide a welcoming space to those who aren't quite sure if they want to be Quaker or not, and many of them are deeply committed Friends who are active in the life of the broader Meeting.

As it happens, my partner and I were not going to join the YAFs when we moved to California, feeling like we were too old and having already moved on from Young Friends in Australia. However, we were welcomed with open arms and encouraged to keep coming back by all of our new Friends, including the younger YAFs. YAFs provide amazing support for the few of us who have children, and there seems no problem with cohesion within the community of predominantly 20+ and 30+ year olds. The teens who do come to YAF activities (some as young as 15) have no problems fitting in and are easily included legally by having a young adult “sponsor” at the event. In my experience, the older YAFs (30+) provide stability, experience and greater financial contributions for the community.

I have a number of formal roles with both the YAF and JYM communities here so am getting a good look at the way things work. Among other things, I am the registrar/treasurer for the annual YAF gathering over the new year (rather like the Australian Young Friends Easter camp) and am serving on the adult committee that supports JYM. What I see are really engaged teens and young adults who are active in the (senior!) Yearly Meeting (YM) as well as their own “young Friends” communities.

I suspect that one of the reasons that YAFs are so engaged is that they were well supported all the way through their teens and given the opportunity to develop their leadership skills through JYM. Something else I have noticed about the YAFs here is that they are often involved in the children's and teen programs. YAFs, and other adults, are able to volunteer as child carers (for the children under 13) or Friendly Adult Presences to work with the teens at YM and other gatherings. As such, they have their registration, accommodation and food paid for (as remittance for their volunteer work) so are able to be at YM without financial burden and are engaged and contributing.

Anyone 21 years or older can volunteer to work with the children or teens. A comprehensive set of information is provided to potential volunteers on the [YM website](#) including a questionnaire similar to the one I filled out when I applied to be a child carer for my local Meeting in Victoria. All carers are also subject to an external background check. The child carers work for around four hours per day. The Friendly Adult Presences (FAPs) sign up as either a ‘night FAP’ or ‘day FAP’ and are on duty for around twelve hours per day. The “night FAPs” sleep in the teen area. The FAPs are not responsible for running the whole program and there are enough of them that they are able to take breaks. The full-time care means that teens are able to be at YM independently of their parents, somewhat similar to being on camp for the week.

One further factor in the success of both JYM and YAF communities here in Pacific Yearly Meeting is the paid Youth Programs Coordinator and Coordinating Committee, an initiative begun in 2009. The Coordinator supports both the teen and young adult groups to develop programs and events for annual session and throughout the year and to find ways to collaborate with adult Friends. She also mentors adults to build their capacities as allies to youth and reinforce the volunteer committee structure rather than rely mainly on one paid individual to be responsible for program delivery. She is not involved in the children's program, as it is supported by a children's religious education committee.

A number of my Friends here have been quick to point out how formative it was for them when they first joined JYM in their early teens and witnessed the 17- and 18-year-olds clerking meetings. They were mightily impressed I think and probably greatly inspired by these older teens who were their new peers, leaders and role models. What a way for these older teens to experience themselves! It stands in stark contrast to my memory of a 16-year-old Young Friend in Australia I watched at their first YF gathering before YM. This young person was trying really hard to fit in with the older crowd (myself included) and was, to my mind, well out of their comfort zone.

Here JYM almost always finds a way to participate in service projects. I believe that being supported to do service through to 18-years-old is not only fun but sets a norm for future activities. The inclusiveness of JYM also flows through to the YAFs who are probably the most radically inclusive group I've ever encountered.

I would like to see Australian teens given the same opportunities as teens here in the USA both for their own sake, and also to strengthen the YAF and older adult communities. Changing our current way of doing things would require a culture shift as well as some training of adults in how to support older teens. Supporting JYM involves a lot of listening, holding back, and speaking up only when necessary – and it is different each year as groups of people move through the program and grow as individuals. Some years the teen leadership require very little adult support and intervention; other years they need much more. This requires maturity on the part of the adults who support them.

While it is very important to maintain broad diversity in the adult support committee, YAFs are often in a great place to provide some of this support as they have a more recent understanding of the needs the teens, and are, in my Aussie and US experience, extremely respectful and capable people. Having YAFs involved in supporting the teens is also a way of providing meaningful engagement for YAFs within the YM, particularly for those who don't otherwise feel very engaged outside the YAF community.

I suspect that it would take extra resources to get a Junior Yearly Meeting up and running for the next YM in Australia, however, I see the possibility for actually strengthening our collective resources as we are able to keep more young people engaged in the Society. I hope to see this become a virtuous cycle bringing new life and vitality to our Australian Quaker community.

Alyssa's Travel Minute & Endorsements

Minuted by PYM RepCom 2016

Fifth Month 2016

Dear Friends in Australia Yearly Meeting,

Pacific Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends introduces Alyssa Nelson (Davis Friends Meeting, California, USA), whom we have employed as our Youth Programs Coordinator since 2011. We recognize Alyssa as a trusted and experienced Friend who has been moved to a ministry of participation, inclusion, diversity, unity, solidarity, and liberation among youth and adults. In the same vein, Alyssa carries a concern for right relationship with indigenous peoples –having experience that includes co-creating an annual service-learning camp for Quaker and Native American youth and adults– that we believe will be strengthened by learning from Australian Friends' relationships with First Nations peoples and efforts toward reparation and healing.

Alyssa came to Friends at age 25 with experience in social and environmental justice work and a yearning for spiritual community. By now, Alyssa has over 20 years' experience in participatory youth and community development, and holds academic degrees in Religion (AB), Experiential Education (MS), and Geography (PhD) that she draws upon in her ministry. She has lived and worked with indigenous communities as a participant-facilitator in the American Friends Service Committee's Mexico Summer Service Project and as a United States Peace Corps Volunteer in Mali. Alyssa attended the 2005 World Gathering of Young Friends and has served as a representative to Friends World Committee for Consultation. Her offerings to our community have included a weekend workshop at Ben Lomond Quaker Center, "Seeking Spirit All Together: Intergenerational Faith, Fun and Fellowship through Service" and day-long workshops on "Becoming Adult Allies to Youth." She acts as a resource person for individual Friends of all ages; committees of our Monthly, Quarterly, and Yearly Meetings; and Quaker organizations within PYM.

We are pleased that Way is opening for Alyssa and our Youth Programs Coordinating Committee to accept your invitation to have Alyssa attend Australia Yearly Meeting in July 2016 and to travel among your local and regional meetings and The Friends' School in Hobart. We hope your community benefits from the time you spend with Alyssa and that we and the wider body of Friends are also enriched as a result. We entrust Alyssa to your care and look forward hearing how Spirit is moving among you and to reading your words of endorsement upon her return.

In the Light,
Diego Navarro, Presiding Clerk
Pacific Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends

Travel Minute Endorsements - Alyssa

1) [See endorsement letter from Jenny Turton, above, following the Overview and Letter of Invitation to Alyssa from AYM Presiding Clerk. Included above instead of here because Jenny's letter gives a good overview of the whole trip, its evolution and some of its fruits, and Cathy and Thistle's roles as well.]

- *Jenny Turton, former AYM Children and JYF Coordinator*

2) To Diego Navarro and Friends of Pacific YM,

Alyssa Nelson and her supporters Thistle West and Cathy Walling have been with us for the duration of this Australian Yearly Meeting in Hobart, Australia from 2nd thru 9th July 2016. Her presence, her enthusiasm and her wealth of ideas have been of great benefit to us all, young and old. We also appreciate the time she took in early January this year to talk from the USA by Skype with our Junior Young Friends (12-17 yr old) at their camp. It is wonderful to observe how Alyssa and Thistle work so well together, and how Cathy holds them in the Light. We thank you all for making this opportunity available.

- *Julian Robertson, Presiding Clerk, Australian Quakers*

3) Dear Friends of Pacific Yearly Meeting,

Alyssa Nelson joined our little community at Silver Wattle Quaker Centre from the 10th-14th July 2016 after attending Australia Yearly with her companions, Thistle est and Cathy Walling. Alyssa's contribution to our community has been supportive, nurturing and entertaining and we have been inspired by her sharing experiences from her work with youth and indigenous people in her community. I am looking forward to a continuing sharing with Alyssa as Spiritual Companions in my new role as Director of Silver Wattle. We are grateful and pleased that she has spent time with us. In peace and friendship,

- *Susan Clarke, Silver Wattle Quaker Centre, 13th July 2016*

4) Dear Diego Navarro, and Pacific YM Friends,

It has been a delight to have Alyssa Nelson here in Canberra Regional Meeting. We were invigorated by the workshop she held, and inspired by her ideas and grounded wisdom regarding integrating Young Friends and Junior Young Friends in our Meeting. Her question and answer session gave us more insights, and we are excited at the ideas we have gleaned from her. In Friendship,

- *Kay de Vogel, Clerk (Canberra Regional Meeting)*

5) Dear Friends in Pacific Yearly Meeting,

It is with great pleasure and anticipation that we have welcomed Alyssa in Melbourne at the Victorian Regional Meeting. Alyssa has brought to us her loving spirit which she has so generously shared with us. We gathered in worship and in workshops and in one-to-one conversations and grew in our understanding of ways in which children and young people could be intimate parts of our Meeting and our lives and the contribution they make to our spiritual journey. We thank Alyssa for the inspiration she has brought to us. In love and peace,

- *Dale Hess, Co-Clerk, Victoria Regional Meeting, Melbourne, Australia*

6) Dear Friends in Pacific Yearly Meeting,

Northern Suburbs Local Meeting (NSLM) was pleased to have Alyssa visit us, and a group of us relished in the opportunity to have a discussion about Alyssa's role and about young people in our Meeting and Regional Meeting. The insights, questions and thoughts will continue to have a ripple effect in our local, regional and yearly meetings. Thank you for entrusting Alyssa to our care. We send our joy back to your Yearly Meeting.

- *Anna Wilkinson, Clerk, Northern Suburbs Local Meeting*

7) To Friends of Pacific Yearly Meeting

Thanks for Alyssa Nelson.....

It has been a great experience for us to have been given the opportunities to walk through this part of our lives together - to worship, study, listen, talk, laugh, cry, pray - have communion together in the depths of those things which are eternal. At the same time we have enjoyed sharing some leisure time learning about each other in the temporal activities of our daily lives, eating, drinking, walking.....

We thank you very much for entrusting Alyssa Nelson into our care and fellowship. She has given us many scenes and ideas about your Quaker activities in Pacific Yearly Meeting enabling the distance between us geographically to seem less daunting.

We appreciate and value the extra courage it may have taken this very young woman to set out on such a long journey to be with us. It has been a very fruitful time for us and it is our hope that Alyssa has many opportunities to share her experiences with you all on her return.

Greetings and love in Friendship from Perth, Western Australia.

- *Margaret Hodgkin (Woodward), on behalf of Clerking Team: Ann Zubrick, Allan Knight, Margaret Hodgkin (Woodward) and Friends in Western Australia Regional Meeting*

8) Dear Friends across the world,

Alyssa has been a generous gift to us here in Tasmania - not just what she has given our Meeting through her workshop (which was engaging, challenging and enriching) and not just the joy of having another young Quaker to spend time with but for what she gave the school. Her manner with our young and older children, with staff, with discernment all gave so much enrichment to our programs, classes and community. More than for all of these, I think you for letting me have a beautiful new friend.

- *Maddy Walker, Quaker Community Coordinator, The Friends' School, and Tasmania Regional Meeting*

9) Dear Friends of Pacific Yearly Meeting,

Thank you for your generosity in relating Alyssa to spend time with us in Hobart, Tasmania. It was wonderful to have her with us at Australia Yearly Meeting and now she has been back for a week as Friend in Residence at the School and finishing on Saturday 6 August with a workshop for our meeting. Attended by 12 people it was informative and heartening. We are inspired to be allies with our children and young people.

In Friendship,

- *Felicity Rose, Ministry, Tasmania Regional Meeting*

10) Dear Friends of Pacific Yearly Meeting,

New South Wales Regional Meeting was blessed with a visit by Alyssa Nelson and Roger Price. They stayed in our meeting houses (Devonshire St and Woodford) and Alyssa ran a session on "Becoming Adult Allies to Youth" - although we called it "with Youth." She opened the space for our meeting to have an open, honest discussion, giving us insight into her work and approach. We will cherish the time we were entrusted with Alyssa and Roger and look forward to continuing connections with them and Pacific Yearly Meeting. In Friendship,

- *Tom Dundas, (co-clerk Devonshire St Local Meeting), 19/8/16*

Thistle's Travel Minute & Endorsements

Minuted by PYM Annual Session, June 2016

Dear Friends in Australia Yearly Meeting,

We are delighted to introduce you to Thistle West (pronouns: they/them/their) and to affirm their gifts for spiritual accompaniment and building connections among people. Last summer, Thistle accompanied our now-Presiding Clerk, Diego Navarro, to Intermountain Yearly Meeting where he presented the keynote talk. Now Thistle will be accompanying our PYM Youth Programs Coordinator, Alyssa Nelson, and fellow elder Cathy Walling of Alaska Friends Conference for the first portion of Alyssa's travels among you this June/July 2016, including your Yearly Meeting in Tasmania, Silver Wattle Quaker Centre, and Canberra Regional Meeting, as well the Young Friends pre-YM camp. We expect that Thistle may also be moved into spoken ministry around their own spiritual journey as a Friend and young adult, which we hope enriches the exchange between our Yearly Meetings.

Thistle, age 18, grew up in the PYM community as the child of families who have been part of PYM and local meetings for three generations. Thistle started regularly participating in Meeting for Worship at age 7 and has attended Friends General Conference, "an association of regional Quaker communities in the U.S. and Canada working together to nurture a vital Quaker faith." These experiences have been significant parts of their conviction and choice to join the Society as a member of Strawberry Creek Friends Meeting (Berkeley, California, USA).

As a younger teen, Thistle served on our PYM Youth Programs Coordinating Committee and as co-clerk of Quarterly and Yearly Meeting teen programs. Thistle has followed a leading to promote gender and sexuality justice, once bringing Alyssa in to help put together a Quarterly Meeting interest group for teens and adults about trans* and non-binary gender identity; this coincided with Thistle and other teens advocating for change in Quarterly Meeting policy on binary-gender-segregated sleeping in the teen program and promoting non-binary language in the teen program handbook revision.

Thistle earned high school credit in Fall 2014 by attending the Woolman Semester, a Quaker educational community in Northern California focused on peace, justice, and sustainability. Thistle published an article about that experience, "237 Acres of God" in *Western Friend Magazine* (May/June 2015): "At Woolman, I often felt like a baby bird: thoroughly safe, but uncomfortably vulnerable, which I see as the ideal state for growth." Thistle passionately finds The Sacred in different places and encounters, which frames how they see the world and shows them how they might help create positive change. They would like to come to better understand globalization, modern colonialism, and post-colonial discourse. To this end, Thistle has just finished their first year at Oberlin College in the state of Ohio, USA with a declared major in Economics and a double minor in Spanish Language and Middle Eastern & North African Studies.

We are delighted for Thistle to have this opportunity to share with and learn from you. We thank them for providing loving support to Alyssa Nelson's ministry and look forward to hearing how Spirit continues to move in this journey.

In the Light,

Diego Navarro, Presiding Clerk, Pacific Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends

Note: Thistle's Travel Minute Endorsements to be included once they're retrieved from a recent move.

Cathy's Travel Minute & Endorsements

June 5, 2016

Dear Friends in Pacific Yearly Meeting and Australia Yearly Meeting:

We at Chena Ridge Friends Meeting (Alaska Friends Conference) send our love and greetings with Cathy Walling as she travels as companion in the ministry with Alyssa Nelson and Thistle West of Pacific Yearly Meeting. Cathy will first join Alyssa for her presentation for the week of Pacific Yearly Meeting Sessions, and then they will travel together with Thistle to Australia Yearly Meeting where Alyssa has been invited to share her experiences serving as Pacific Yearly Meeting Youth Program Coordinator.

Cathy has been a faithful member of Chena Ridge Meeting for 20 years, serving the meeting as co-clerk, and clerk of various committees. She has also served as clerk of the Yearly Meeting Ministry and Nurture Committee. Her gifts of eldering have been recognized within our Meeting and more widely by Friends General Conference Traveling Ministries Program. She has served as an elder for several Friends over the years including traveling twice to Australia as a companion in the ministry with Elaine Emily.

For the past four years Cathy has provided spiritual accompaniment for the Way of the Spirit Contemplative Study in Community Program in the Pacific Northwest of the USA. Cathy with her husband, Scott Bell, continue to offer Couple Enrichment workshops and retreats.

She is accountable to an anchor committee within our Meeting, which aids in her discernment and provides spiritual support. In support of Cathy's concern for our planet, Chena Ridge Friends are also individually pledging carbon offsets for her travel through reducing resource use, conservation, recycling, and re-use.

We commend her to your care as she travels and trust that she will be faithful to what God is calling her to do.

In the Light,

Charlotte Basham, clerk

Chena Ridge Friends Meeting

Approved in Meeting for Business Sixth month 5th day, 2016

Travel Minute Endorsements - Cathy

6-22-2016

Dear Chena Ridge Friends,

We were so blessed to have Cathy at our Annual Session. Not only did she accompany Alyssa in many of her meetings, preparations and functions as our Yearly Meeting's Youth coordinator, Cathy played an important Eldering role at our Annual Session. Cathy's ability to recognize and impart upon our Young Adult Friends the gifts they had helped catalyze in them a shift to seeing themselves as Elders sitting on the facing bench in the Young Adult Friends hosted meeting for Worship. Cathy brought deep spiritual ministry and love to our Meeting for Worship and in holding a deep space in our different sessions. We send many thanks for Cathy's presence and are comforted to know she will be accompanying Alyssa and Thistle on their ministry in Australia.

With Love and Peace,
Diego Navarro,
Clerk Pacific Yearly Meeting

Dear Charlotte Basham and Friends of Chena Ridge Meeting,

We are most fortunate to have the quiet eldering presence of Cathy Walling with us a Australia Yearly Meeting 2-9 July 2016 in Hobart, Tasmania. We have learned much over the last four years of her visits regarding the value of the still presence at our meetings.

In Peace,
Julian Robertson
Presiding Clerk, Australian Quakers

Dear Chena Ridge Friends,

Cathy has been with our little community here at Silver Wattle from the 11th to the 14th July. Cathy's qualities of gentleness, curiosity, care and humour all part of her gift for eldering have been a precious contribution to us all. She has shared rituals and practices for winter, enjoyed the landscape, set fires and shared in conversations, laughter and times of deep spiritual connections. She travelled with Alyssa and Thistle and a Friend from NSW Regional Meeting to visit a small worshipping group in Goulburn, who enjoyed her presence and news. Her visit will be remembered with gratitude and joy.

Love and friendship
Susan Clarke
Silver Wattle Quaker Centre
Australia 13.7.16

Timeline, Itinerary, and Trip Notes

This section is under development

Pre-trip:

- Sally moves to USA / PYM
- Sally's communication and then article in the *Australian Friend* (See Sally's reflection section in this document)
- Introduction of Alyssa and Jenny Turton, by Sally Kingsland (Jenny was Alyssa's counterpart in AYM at the time)
- Invitation to Alyssa from AYM
 - Exploration of possibility with Jenny Turton
 - Formal invitation from AYM Presiding Clerk
- Discernment with YPCC
- Discernment with Cathy
- Help with AYM's new JYF Summer Camp (Prep Nov/Dec. Camp in January)
 - Visioning
 - Planning
 - Paperwork/ Forms
 - Adult Roles "FRAP" concept
 - Community Expectations/Agreements
 - Skype with campers and FRAPs
- Invitation of Thistle to join
- Skype calls with Cathy

PYM Annual Session:

- Cathy as Alyssa's elder
- YAF Pre-Annual Session Retreat at Redwood Forest Meeting
 - Meeting SkyRoad Webb (Coast Miwok)
- Welcome to Country at PYM
- YPC duties.....
- Send-off (Carl Magruder)
- Evaluation Meeting
- Rest day....

Travel in Australia:

Google phrase "Map of Quaker Meetings in Australia" or click:

https://www.google.com/maps/d/viewer?mid=16hA2FvcZhYYFoc7T-T1BudUZhTo&hl=en_US&ll=-27.435568218816368%2C133.83304023437495&z=5

- SFO - MEL
- Pt Lonsdale
- Geelong

- Melbourne
 - New VRM Centre
- YF Camp (Thistle)
- MEL - HBA
- AYM at The Friends School in Hobart, Tasmania
 - Prep Sessions & Formal Sessions
 - JYFs (teens)
 - Children
 - YFs
 - Teatimes
 - Penn Friends
 -
- HBA - CBR
- Silver Wattle Quaker Centre
 - Retreat time
 - Reflection
 - Visit remote Friends in Goulburn
 - Time with Backhouse Lecturer (Marge and Carl)
- Cathy returns home
- Canberra Regional Meeting (Canberra): Workshop and Meeting talk
- Thistle returns home
- Victoria Regional Meeting (Melbourne): Workshop and Meeting talk
 - Northern Suburbs Local Meeting
- Western Australia Regional Meeting (Perth): Workshop and Meeting talk, meeting with parents
- Friend in Residence at The Friends School in Hobart, Tasmania
 - Year level meetings (semi-programmed worship with me giving the message; requested topic: Competition and Athletics as a Friend)
 - Geography class: present about Quaker Oaks Farm Spring Youth Camp
 - Year 2s
 - Year 5s
 - Netball
- Roger joins
- Tasmania Regional Meeting (Hobart): Mini-Workshop and Meeting talk
- New South Wales Regional Meeting (Sydney)
 - Devonshire Street Meeting
 - Woodford Meeting (Blue Mountains)
- Alyssa and Roger return home

Post-trip:

- Presentation to CPQM Fall Gathering
- Reflection times between/among: Alyssa, Thistle, Cathy, Sally, Jenny, YPCC
- PYM Annual Session: written report, interest group, travel endorsements

--end report--