

Summary of Evaluations of Pacific Yearly Meeting's Annual Session 2017

Prepared by members of PYM Ministry and Oversight Committee (M&O)

Introduction

We hope that this summary will be useful to the broader Yearly Meeting in providing an overview of how people felt about Annual Session (AS) 2017. The summary is based on information gathered from 98 evaluations (out of a total of 247 adults registered) filled out by AS participants, including Young Adult Friends. These respondents tended to be older, and to have attended Yearly Meeting more than five times (73%)—many over 21 times (29%).* In addition, we summarize the results of 26 Junior Yearly Meeting evaluations (22 youth, 4 Friendly Responsible Adult Presences), 10 parents of children in the Children's Program, and an additional 97 (66% of worship sharing participants) evaluations that focused only on the experience of Worship Sharing. The evaluations touched on many topics, and it is not our intention to reflect on all of them here. We do note in a few places where things are under consideration for change next year.

Overview of the various survey responses

Overall, the overwhelming majority surveyed were very positive about their experience of AS 2017—fully 96% of the respondents reported they were “overall glad I attended,” with 87% in strong agreement with this statement.. The responses were noticeably more positive than the last few years. Respondents gave strongly positive responses about how plenaries were organized, and about the practice of respectful relationships during the gathering. There was more tempered agreement with positive statements about the depth of worship and the experience of Spirit moving amongst us, although little disagreement that these statements were true. Those respondents who attended Interest groups also were strongly in agreement that the groups were interesting and well presented.

Opening plenary, the Keynote address, and Meeting for Memorials were all well attended (over 80% of our respondents went to each of these). Other plenaries attracted a smaller number of our respondents (attendance mostly in the 26-69% range)—still strong attendance, considering the competition from other activities in the gathering's smorgasbord (hiking, fellowship, napping, browsing the bookstore, working in the children's program or JYM, secretariat work, committee work, etc.)

Of the 247 adults who registered for Annual Session, about 60% (148) participated in Worship Sharing. Worship sharing is probably the perennial favorite group activity. Those respondents who attended worship sharing groups on the whole agreed that the experience was “meaningful and worthwhile.” The locations of the worship sharing groups continue to be a challenge that M&O works on at length every year. We will continue to endeavor to improve the options while working within the limitations that exist.

Responding to a question related to the experiment of including a full weekend in the Annual Gathering schedule, 60% of respondents agreed (strongly or moderately) that

the inclusion of the weekend was useful to them. Based on this positive response, scheduling the gathering to include a weekend will continue for at least the next two years. On the whole Junior Yearly Meeting appears to have greatly enjoyed their activities and being together. The Alternatives to Violence training that the teens did, along with other community games, were widely enjoyed and beneficial in building community. The service project with Sky Road Webb of the Coast Miwok was also valued and enjoyed. The teens were very grateful and had very few problems with any of the Friendly Responsible Adult Presences (FRAPs) who supported and chaperoned the group. Mixed/non-gendered dorms were new this year and appear to have both met their aim in being more inclusive and functioned well. While many activities were appreciated, the dance appears to have been a highlight. JYM Worship Sharing left room for improvement next year, particularly regarding queries and focus of the groups and there is room for improvement in how the broader YM community and JYM engage meaningfully, particularly during plenaries.

The Children's Program collected evaluations from parents and those who responded gave almost uniformly top rating to all aspects of the program and teachers. It is clear that the parents and children value and appreciate the work of the Children's Program Committee and teaching staff.

Interesting facts

- Almost all the people who experienced the Children's, Junior Yearly Meeting or YAF programs **and** filled out an evaluation survey said that it was a positive experience!
- On the other hand, very few of the respondents reported attending these programs. Attendance at the dance by our adult respondents was also low. Are we making progress in our goals of becoming more inclusively intergenerational?

How will this information be used?

Various PYM officers, staff and committees, including M&O and the Presiding Clerk, will be using the information gathered through the evaluations to support the design and improvement of the PYM AS 2018.

Further information

Further information about PYM and Annual Sessions, including the 2017 epistle, 2017 minutes and information about next year's gathering are available at the PYM website: <https://www.pacificyearlymeeting.org/annual-session-minutes-reports/2017-annual-session-reports-and-minutes/>

*Of the 98 evaluations filled out by attendees, 59 (60%) were from respondents over the age of 60. Only 3 (3%) were young adults, age 19-35; 33 (34%) were age 36-60. While we know just from looking around the room that many older Friends were filling the chairs, this gathering had more younger friends than are represented in our survey sample. In addition, our respondents have been around the PYM gathering for rather a number of years—73% have been to more than 5 gatherings; fully 29% have been to more than 20! On the other hand, we heard from only 9 first time attendees, while 55 first time attendees (of all ages) registered.