

# Peace and Social Order Committee Report to PYM Annual Session 2018

## **SUMMARY**

The Pacific Yearly Meeting Peace and Social Order committee has met faithfully once per month via telephone conference call in addition to our 'in person' gathering in Visalia.

This has been year of re-visioning the Peace and Social Order committee. We have reviewed the committee's description, guidelines and responsibilities and have created preliminary drafts of revisions. Some feel this is necessary work for clarity of responsibilities and committee formation, others feel it is a waste of time and takes away from needed work of witnessing in the world.

The committee has unity regarding networking more effectively with Monthly Meetings (MM's) of PYM. Some members of PSO reached out on an ongoing basis to PYM MM's compiling a list of social concerns actions (24 MM are involved in AVP, 18 with the unsheltered, 4 with ecumenical groups, 3 with international ministries and 2 setting up their own non-profits). We, as a committee, review all state of the meeting reports, and continually look forward to learning about the leadings of the Spirit regarding peace and social concerns throughout PYM whether through various reports, emails, telephone calls or in person visits. We appreciate Monthly Meetings' letting the PSO committee know about their work and approved Minutes of Concern. We also look forward to MM's sharing their work with other MM's, such as Sacramento Meeting's "Prison Packages" as well as our committee members sharing what they've learned about MM needs and social concerns during our Interest group, "Friends Helping Friends." The committee also prioritized having interest groups on income inequality and safe water.

This has been a year of great transition for the Peace and Social Order Committee holding a tension around the unresolved issue of processing Minutes of Concern during PYM and their follow up. Some committee members feel connecting with Monthly Meetings addressing aging, more effective networking, and ongoing challenges is a higher priority. This tension of how best to function between goal driven witnessing and relationship networking oriented work, is an ongoing balancing act as Peace and Social Order committee heads into the future. The quest remains of how to be most faithful to both simultaneously in supporting Monthly Meetings and PYM to be a more effective voice of conscious and witness in the world from a place of spiritual depth that is accountable, while also addressing the needs of our larger PYM community members. Current challenges include how do we measure this accountability? What does our continued reflection, honoring leadings and discernment require of us? What attention is needed as some MM's are diminishing?

We live in disruptive times collectively as a nation. The urgency of social justice work calls to us from every possible angle, but how we as Quakers, dedicated to Spirit led action regarding social justice issues and concerns, remain centered in our following leadings while witnessing remains central. Multiple opinions exist as how to best proceed, but as of yet, the articulation of unity in how Spirit is asking us to collectively proceed remains a mystery. We honor the tension and ongoing conflict, the yearnings of collective striving, and give gratitude for the enormous work that many MM's are doing.

### **Acknowledging the Work of Spirit in Approved Monthly Meeting Minutes of Concern**

Although there is no formal process at this time for bringing Minutes of Concern to PYM as a corporate body for approval, since we as a committee are committed to networking and giving voice to how Spirit is moving within various Monthly Meetings, we are sharing the following Monthly Meeting Minutes of Concern. We acknowledge one of these minutes came out of community pain and loss, one was inspired by the work of FCNL and their advocacy team work, another by the leadings of an individual

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studying income inequality and economic disparity and the last being witness to the suffering of children due to immigration injustice. PSO recognizes that spiritual formation occurs while Minutes of concern are crafted and Friends' witness is an important form of public theology in our quest for just peace.

## **Approved Minutes of Concern:**

- 1 Central Coast Friends Meeting 2/25/18
- 2 Orange Grove Friends Meeting 4/8/18
- 3 Santa Monica Friends Meeting
- 4 La Jolla Monthly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends 6/17/18

### **1 Central Coast Friends Meeting (San Luis Obispo) 2/25/18**

"The Central Coast Friends Meeting approves endorsement of the Religious Declaration for a New Drug Policy calling for an end to the War on Drugs."

#### RELIGIOUS DECLARATION FOR NEW DRUG POLICY:

"As voices of faith, we call for an end to the War on Drugs which the United States has waged, at home and abroad, for over 47 years. This War has failed to achieve its stated objectives; deepened divisions between rich and poor, black, white, and brown; squandered over one trillion dollars; and turned our country into a "prisoner" nation." <http://newdrugpolicy.org/religious-declaration/>

The New Drug Policy and its alignment with Quaker testimonies:

"Friends for over 300 years have sought to live 'in the virtue of that life and power that takes away the occasion of all wars.' Today our country is engaged in a 'war on drugs' which bears all the hallmarks of war: displaced populations, disrupted economies, terrorism, abandonment of hope by those the war is supposedly being fought to help, the use of military force, the curtailment of civil liberties, and the demonizing of the 'enemies.' While we are all affected by the war on drugs, we are painfully aware that particularly victimized are people of color, the poor, and other less powerful persons." [2] - <http://newdrugpolicy.org/quaker-perspective-drug-policy-reform/>

### **2 Orange Grove Friends Meeting April 8, 2018**

Orange Grove Meeting approved a minute supporting FCNL's work around averting war with Korea, which was also approved by So Cal Quarterly Meeting:

"Led by spirit and faithful to our Quaker peace testimony, Orange Grove meeting of the religious society of Friends supports the FCNL advocacy team effort to avert war with North Korea by urging Congress to pass S 2047 and HR 4837, bills that would prevent the president from launching a preemptive attack on north Korea without the authorization of Congress. Given that our President and the leaders of North and South Korea have agreed to meet, we urge them to do so without preconditions since preconditions have been a stumbling block to past negotiations. We also support and encourage all those who were working to build bridges of understanding and trust between North and South Korea. We are call to love those who may seem to be enemies, and to find ways to turn them into our allies and friends.

### **3 Santa Monica Meeting April 2018**

"Santa Monica meeting approves the following minute on income inequality, economic inequality and social justice noting our desire to share it widely, and acknowledging the discernment involved in preparing it.

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Friends (Quakers) believe that there is a divine spark in everyone, and on that basis, we believe in the equality of all people. That belief leads us to create community among ourselves, foster community in the broader society, and promote equal justice and equal opportunity.

We find that the laws, tax structure, and regulations of our society now disproportionately favor and reward the few, while disproportionately impoverishing the many. Wealthy special interests have used their resources and access to influence politics, the courts and regulatory agencies to redistribute wealth to enrich themselves at the expense of the middle class and the poor, who now experience declining wealth, declining earning power and Declining levels of education. Our society now experiences rising poverty, homelessness, mental illness, drug addiction and environmental degradation. These factors in combination result in the weakening of our democratic institutions and our social fabric. We also find that this inequality is reversible, with corrections of the tax codes, regulations, laws, and political reform.

We call on Friends to teach themselves and others about the truth of economic inequality. We call on Friends, people of other faiths, and people of goodwill to recognize the need to change our tax code, our regulations and our electoral processes to restore our social safety net and our educational systems to create a more just, healthier and more sustainable society based on principles of equality and respect for our fellow human beings. We call on Friends, people of other faiths, the people of goodwill to work to reduce income inequality in our society by supporting actions that redistribute the fruits of our economy more broadly and equitably in order to build a stronger, more just, more rewarding and more stable society.

Economic inequality is at the root of many social ills we now see. We seek to reduce income and wealth disparity, while recognizing that success in doing so will not cure all social ills. Our goal is to reduce economic stress in our society to the point that people of modest means may lead happy, productive lives and realize their God-given potential. We seek to restore the social fabric and respect for the inherent dignity of all.

Our goal reflects our Quaker testimonies on simplicity, equality, peace, community, and integrity.”

#### **4 La Jolla Monthly Meeting** of the Religious Society of Friends

4270 Eads Avenue, La Jolla, California, 92037

17th June 2018

"La Jolla Monthly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends strongly opposes the separation of children from their parents during immigration enforcement operations as contrary to the will of the Divine and the historic testimonies of Friends. We call for an immediate end to this practice.”

We are grateful that Friends continue to witness against war, military intervention, criminalization of people (whether drug users or immigrants), and economic exploitation of people.

We are also grateful for the good work of Western Friend in compiling the leadings of Spirit within various Monthly Meetings, (<https://westernfriend.org/media/quaker-meetings-re-politics-2017>) as well the “Right Relationship” work generated by Paula Palmer in various meetings.

#### **Members of the Committee:**

David Breitzmann, Linnea Hanson, Stephen McNeil, Graciela Martinez, Anthony Manousus, Linda Dunn (recently resigned, but a wonderful contributor earlier in the year), Sandra Gey, Eric Straatma and Shannon Frediani (Clerk).