

Elder to the Presiding Clerk Report to Annual Session 2019

SUMMARY

This is a report from the elder of the Presiding Clerk of Pacific Yearly Meeting. In this report, we offer a description of the Elder-Clerk relationship for the first year of the Clerk's service, from July 31, 2018 to June 1, 2019.

When Sandy Kewman became the Presiding Clerk of Pacific Yearly Meeting in July 31st of 2018, an effort was made by the Sub-Committee on Eldering of PYM Ministry and Oversight to appoint an Elder for her tenure as Clerk. I was approached by the committee and asked to consider this service. Sandy and I have been close friends for over thirty years, first in Ann Arbor, Michigan and now as neighbors in Nevada City, California where we are both members of Grass Valley Friends Meeting.

In considering the request to serve as Sandy's Elder, I had to lay our friendship aside and first discern if this was work that I was called to, that God wanted for me. Then I had to ask if I was ready and able to make the commitment, to provide spiritual accompaniment for Sandy's ministry. As her Elder, I would be asked to hold Sandy in worship and care and to hold the ministry that she was taking on, the clerking of our yearly meeting, in worship and care. Was I able to fully embrace that role?

I did not respond immediately, but sought counsel and guidance from Friends, from God. When I felt I could say yes, it came without any hesitation but certainly with a sense of moving into the unknown.

Sandy and I began meeting weekly sometime in October of 2018. Sandy travels down the path from her house to mine. We meet for about 90 minutes, beginning and ending in worship. Our meetings allow Sandy to speak what is on her mind and heart: questions, struggle, ponderings, new ideas, in a worshipful space.

My work during these times is to be present and to hold Sandy's work in worship. I offer reflections when led and when requested. We talk over how things went and how they might go. There is a difference in these conversations than those of our friendship. There is a sense that we are being asked to listen beyond our knowing. Over the year, Sandy and I have both perceived an increase in the spiritual depth and openness of our interactions. We are more willing to let truth arise.

In addition to our weekly meetings, Sandy and I traveled together to Representative Committee and participated in the Coordinating Team calls throughout the year. At RepCom, my role expanded to take on caring for Sandy's rest, nourishment and solitude, with her guidance. We are both finding our way in these efforts as we continue to grow and refine our roles in this partnership.

As our relationship has grown and deepened we have experienced growing pains. It has not always been smooth or trouble free. We come up against ourselves as we walk this path. We are finding our way here as well.

For me, this experience has led to a greater sense of God's presence in my life. I feel deeply nourished by the practice of sinking down to the seed, holding a worshipful space as an elder, supporting the faithfulness of the minister and the ministry.

For her part, Sandy describes the experience of our work together thusly: "When I enter our meeting, I am not sure what will happen, but it always leads to deeper knowing and then to deep gratitude. It helps me stand still in the light. It is as if we are both being accompanied by Jesus. I often feel that we are meeting in the upper room."

Respectfully submitted,
Dorothy Henderson, Elder to the Presiding Clerk