

Ministry & Oversight Committee Report to Annual Session 2019

SUMMARY

Ministry and Oversight Committee has experienced the joy of worshipping and working together with each other and with our Presiding clerk. We have also felt the weight of its responsibility to support the spiritual vitality of Pacific Yearly Meeting and help our community live up to its Testimonies. The sustainability and future prosperity of our Yearly Meeting will require changes in ourselves, our structure, and our processes. At our Spring meeting, we expressed our hopes and expectations for Pacific Yearly Meeting:

To break down the walls of Quaker culture that unintentionally prevent others from feeling fully included;

To embrace the need to grieve when letting go or laying something down, even when we are moving toward something we love;

To address conflict as it arises.

Our opportunity--and challenge—is to speak to the frightened child within each of us.

Areas of Concern

Events at the 2018 Annual Session, the hiring process for the Youth Program Coordinator, and our Winter Meeting with Hawai'i Friends made it clear that PYM continues to struggle with racial justice and inclusion. Friends' intentions are good, but those raised with white privilege can have difficulty in seeing implicit biases and the barriers created by systemic racism in our practices.

At its Fall meeting, M&O renewed our commitment to reach out to meetings-at-a-distance, particularly those that are not part of a Quarterly Meeting. Following our Winter meeting in Honolulu, a number of committee members visited with Friends on Big Island at Hilo and Kona. The isolation Hawai'ian Friends feel goes deep. Moving forward, M&O will continue to look for ways to support and bring together Hawai'i Friends and ensure that Friends on the islands have opportunities to interact with PYM in multiple ways. Ongoing concerns from Mexico City Friends about events at the Casa de los Amigos underscore the continuing need for M&O to reach out to meetings-at-a-distance.

PYM is also struggling with support for our children and youth. Concerns surfacing in Junior Yearly Meeting, difficulties in staffing the Children's Program, and the unrealistic demands we had come to place on our retiring Youth Program Coordinator all speak to this problem. As the only paid staff person in the Yearly Meeting, the Youth Program Coordinator took on many administrative and support tasks that were needed but clearly beyond the immediate Youth Program, including support for PYM communications and the Children's Program.

We observed that our Nominating Committee has struggled with finding members and especially clerks for a number of PYM committees. Clerking should be a joyful task and Yearly Meeting Committee Clerks should feel prepared and supported to take on the job. M&O is concerned that Friends who have reluctantly stepped up to serve or felt ill-prepared to do so are being placed in untenable positions, to the detriment of the Friends serving and the smooth functioning of the committees.

Many Friends in key positions with PYM feel overcommitted. PYM has been reluctant to hire paid staff to support the ongoing functions of the yearly meeting, leaving much to the volunteers who serve as officers and on committees. Given the difficulties we are seeing in filling positions and supporting our functioning throughout the year, is it time to consider reducing the number of committees, laying down

Ministry & Oversight Committee Report to Annual Session 2019

some functions, or hiring additional paid staff? Within M&O, for example, we found it useful to do away with two subgroups and operate as simply one committee.

Areas for Celebration

PYM is blessed with many young leaders, well-grounded in their faith and practice. The yearly meeting will be continually enriched by their energy and talents as older Friends move into roles of support, making way for new leadership.

The Eldering Subcommittee helped the Yearly Meeting stay grounded in the Spirit by offering Wednesday night worship throughout the year and providing accompaniment to officers and clerks. We look to those who received this support to share their experiences as we seek to strengthen and improve the work of our elders. We have also begun to explore the best way to acknowledge ministers in the Yearly Meeting.

In these troubled times, Friends are again embracing the wholeness of our Quaker faith calling us to an inward journey and an outward witness. We see a growing awareness of the opportunities that await us as we joyfully take up the task of dismantling racism and oppression in our own Religious Society of Friends as well as in the world. The growing connections between PYM and the Wukchumni tribe at the Spring Service Learning Camp at Quaker Oaks farm have enriched our understanding of eldering and spurred us to deeper examination of the role of Friends in the ongoing trauma faced by Native people.

There is hunger for continuing religious education and renewal around our decision-making processes. We are exploring new modalities such as QuakerSpeak videos and on-line educational resources at Western Friend web site, videoconference meetings for committee business and even for worship. Some are being led to reach beyond those who are already part of Quaker meetings to bring our Light to those who are hungry for spiritual nourishment. Others are reaching out to engage in interfaith witness to build a world that truly embraces the dignity and worth of every person.

Finally, we will again be considering affiliation with Friends General Conference. A summary of the issues around affiliation can be found under the heading FGC Affiliation at the following link:

<https://www.pacificyearlymeeting.org/2019/documents/pym-committee-reports/ministry-and-oversight-committee-docs/new-document-and-renewed-request-for-further-seasoning-on-fgc-affiliation/>

Thanks to all in the Yearly Meeting who have supported our work, especially La Jolla, Honolulu, Big Island, and San Francisco Meetings for hosting us this year. We look forward to gathering in worship and fellowship at our annual session.

The Committee consists of Elena Anderson-Williams, Redwood Forest; Gail Eastwood, Humboldt; Shayne Lightner, Santa Monica; Valerie Nuttman, Santa Cruz; Kylin Navarro Burger, Berkeley; Eric Sabelman, Palo Alto; Thistle West, Strawberry Creek; Shan Cretin, Santa Monica, Co-Clerk; Jim Summers, La Jolla, Co-Clerk.

Faithfully submitted,
Shan Cretin & Jim Summers, Co-Clerks