

Pacific Yearly Meeting Unity with Nature Discernment Report to Representative Committee 2020

SUMMARY

The Unity with Nature Committee remains in a state of ongoing discernment. Progress has been made in the form of enlisting a *de facto* working group, to whom background material, proposals and queries have been distributed for their consideration. Interest groups and potential plenary presentations at 2020 Annual Session are planned, as well as a series of retreats to encourage worshipful listening.

Status with respect to nominating new Unity with Nature Committee members

Although since 2018 a dedicated group of Pacific Yearly Meeting (PacYM) members has held the concern for our Yearly Meeting's efforts to address climate change and the larger concern of right relationship of humankind to Creation, we have not approached unity on a way forward for the PacYM Unity with Nature Committee (UwN)

- **Available alternatives:** Although good order may prescribe waiting for a new UwN job description to be approved by the whole of PacYM at an Annual Session before recruiting members of the committee, the need to move more quickly may prompt either of two different decisions: (1) appointment of an interim body to conduct UwN business while concurrently developing its mission and scope of action, or (2) appointment of a group of Friends already engaged in UwN-like work under a mandate to "act as led." The latter is unfortunately quite close to the situation that resulted in dysfunction of the UwN Committee, prompting this period of discernment. An approach to explore is having Friends interested in serving on UwN submit a written statement of willingness to serve the Yearly Meeting regardless of their own predilection.
- **Reflection on 2019 PacYM Annual Session:** Last year the two Unity with Nature interest group slots were set aside for topics related to reviving a functional UwN Committee. While well-attended, the intensity of attenders' feelings diverted the intended agenda of reviewing the UwN Committee's past accomplishments and comparing it to other Quaker and non-Quaker religion-based environmental work. The resulting focus on urgent action contributed little toward a sense of unity about the mandate of PacYM UwN in the future. See also the report to Annual Session http://www.pacificyearlymeeting.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Unity_with_Nature_Report_to_AS_2019.v4.pdf

Discussion/working group

This is an informal working group starting with Friends who signed up at 2019 Annual Session to help re-establish the UwN committee.

- **Composition of working group:** There are 49 members, of whom 29 signed up at 2019 interest groups and 15 later in the session or afterward. An additional 5 comprise PacYM Clerks, M&O Co-Clerks and CPQM Clerk. The 2019 sign-up form asked if, in addition to being informed of progress, individuals wished to take on the role of liaison to their Monthly Meeting and/or participate actively in the discernment process; the numbers were 13 and 12 respectively.
- **Communications to working group:** In order to engage a wide group of Friends in the process, we intended to send surveys and queries to those in the group who opted-in, and also to Clerks of Meetings not represented in this list. This has not happened to the extent necessary to keep recipients engaged and in conversation with each other. Rather than continue using email, we are considering setting up a Google group or a sub-group on the contact management system "Salesforce NPSP" being tested by PacYM Communications Committee.

Actions Friends can take in the meantime

Friends should be aware that PacYM UwN is not the only outlet for demonstrating their concern. More involvement with these organizations can be reported back to the working group, informing us how the concern is being addressed on a larger scale than PacYM's biogeographic region.

- **QEW: Quaker EarthCare Witness** will hold its 2020 Spring Steering Committee Meeting in Durham, North Carolina, April 23 - 26th. PacYM has two representatives to QEW (Patricia Constantino, Mexico & Yumi Kawano, Big Island. <https://www.quakerearthcare.org>)
- **FCNL: Friends Committee on National Legislation Spring Lobby Weekend**, Saturday, March 28 to Tuesday, March 31 in Washington, D.C., will focus on advocating a price on carbon emissions. <https://www.fcnl.org/updates/spring-lobby-weekend-2020-739>
- **FWCC: Friends World Committee for Consultation** is holding "How does God call us to act: An Online Conference with Friends Worldwide" a Zoom conference lasting 11 hours on the topic of sustainability. <http://fwcc.world/sustainability/conference2020>. While this event will be over before Representative Committee, a summary will be taken to the world plenary in 2023.
- **Quarterly Meetings:** College Park Quarterly Meeting's Fall and Winter sessions were on topics related to "Harmony with Creation," resulting in a minute and queries for consideration by PacYM Monthly Meetings. Heightened interest within CPQM is a model for reviving the PacYM UwN Committee, and some of the same Friends are likely candidates for a new UwN Committee.

Preparation for 2020 PacYM Annual Session

- **Interest group proposals:** Last year the 2 UwN interest group slots were set aside for topics related to reviving a functional UwN Committee. One of this year's slots should continue this theme, hopefully working on a draft for a new PacYM UwN charter. Another topic could be reports from Monthly Meetings on UwN actions within their Meetings, possibly including the minutes they have recorded and transmitted to CPQM. At the request of CPQM Clerk Barbara Babin, Shelley Tanenbaum (General Secretary of QEW) and Eric Sabelman (appointed by PacYM Nominating Committee to facilitate UwN re-visioning) will season proposals for submission.
- **Plenary time:** UwN has been on a downward spiral of attention during PacYM Annual Sessions for at least 10 years, to the extent that some former members of the Committee no longer attend. This is in contrast to other YMs granting increased attention to the concerns represented by UwN, such as the 2019 gathering of North Pacific Yearly Meeting <https://npym.org/AS2019/>.

Retreats

- With the encouragement of PacYM M&O Committee, we are resuming plans for a series of retreats to bring participants in discernment together for in-person deliberation in a worshipful atmosphere.
- Planning is in early stages, and will depend on the level of interest among the working group, as well as site availability. The first opportunity is June 5-7, 2020, at Sierra Friends Center, which would allow outcome from the retreat to be considered at 2020 PacYM Annual Session. A second retreat could be at Ben Lomond Quaker Center in May through early July, before 2021 Annual Session.

The Committee consists of:

Continuing members: Andrea Beane, Santa Monica (appointed 2017 through 2020), Lora Powell, Berkeley (appointed 2017 through 2021)

Discernment facilitator: Eric Sabelman, Palo Alto (appointed by Nominating Committee 2018)