

# Pacific Yearly Meeting Ministry and Oversight Committee Report to Annual Session 2020

## **SUMMARY**

Ministry and Oversight Committee has again experienced the joy of worshipping and working with each other and with our Presiding Clerk despite the challenges this year has brought. We have felt the weight of our responsibility as PacYM faces unforeseen challenges from social, economic, and political events, the COVID-19 pandemic, and our inability to ignore necessary changes in our assumptions about ourselves, our structures, and our practices. We recognize that, even in the Society of Friends, we work against a background of a national history of ethnic cleansing of the continent, enslavement of a race and brutalization and oppression of a gender. When we are not free of these influences on our behavior and thinking, it trammels the expression of Spirit in our lives and our witness.

At our winter meetings in January, we articulated our hopes and expectations for the year: *We seek to ensure that service on M&O is joyful and spiritually rewarding, that the committee is a safe and nurturing place to bring our truth and build loving community. We seek to discern what the Society of Friends is, what it is called to be and what we have to say to the nation and the world. What is the unvarnished truth about the Society of Friends? What is our prophetic message? What obstacles interfere with discernment and witness?*

## **REPORT**

### **Areas of Celebration**

We continue to be encouraged by the way many younger Friends, well grounded in their faith and practice, are stepping into leadership and service roles in our community. We are delighted by the way Friends have risen to the challenges of changing how we meet during a time of quarantine and pulled together to provide mutual aid. Virtual formats have extended access to Meeting, providing some consolation for the loss of face to face fellowship. Meeting by video has provided an opportunity to (literally) look at ourselves in a new way. We hope to develop other ways to expand access to our community, including a pay as led format for Annual Sessions, and simultaneous Spanish/English translation of meetings at Annual Sessions.

We have seen Friends willing to address issues of racial justice and inclusivity in new ways although we are conscious of the deep pain caused when we fall short. We have a lot of work to do but remain hopeful.

Pacific Yearly Meeting is now part of Friends General Conference, with an increased contribution and two representatives to this year's virtual gathering. (We encourage Friends to use "PacYM" and "PhilYM" instead of "PYM" and "the other PYM" for clarity as we enter more fully into the community of North American Quakers.)

We look forward to gathering in worship and fellowship at our annual session, embracing the opportunities for broader participation via the Zoom format.

### **Areas of Concern**

Virtual AS may provide additional challenges in doing business, as well as to the forging of friendships and the building of the blessed community. Racial Justice Subcommittee and M&O have been talking about the need for ground rules and safe spaces for all. If our commitment to racial justice and radical inclusivity is to be realized, we must be ready to notice patterns of oppression and to recognize faithfulness as they occur regardless of format.

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PacYM's struggle to support for our children and youth has also been compounded by the shift to meeting online. How do we engage our children and youth?

M&O renews our commitment to continue to reach out to meetings-at-a-distance, particularly those that are not part of a Quarterly Meeting. 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 PacYM. Concerns from Mexico City Friends about events at the Casa de los Amigos continue. Two competing boards have been established, and control of the Casa is at issue. The Meeting is currently locked out. M&O is attempting to understand and provide whatever assistance it can to the Meeting but has limited options with the Casa since it is an independent non-profit.

## **Recommendations for Action**

M&O recommends that:

1. PacYM begin discernment about augmenting the role of Representative Committee in doing the business of the Meeting. We believe this could release plenary time at Annual Sessions for worship and spiritual discernment, as well as allow for more focused discussions of the business among informed Representatives from every Meeting. We propose to set up one or more threshing sessions in the Fall, and that a proposal be taken to Representative Committee to be seasoned before consideration at Annual Sessions 2021.
2. Pacific Yearly Meeting begin serious consideration of hiring paid administrative support for its activities. The need is urgent for someone who knows the Yearly Meeting, can integrate efforts across the entire organization, and can access reliable institutional memory. We see a need to relieve the Youth Programs Coordinator and Assistant to the Clerk from having to build infrastructure necessary to do their jobs, and to provide clerical, communication, and other assistance to clerks and committees to prevent volunteer burnout. We recommend the development and circulation of a proposed job description, followed by the holding of one or more threshing sessions in the Fall to consider the matter and produce a proposal in time for consideration by Representative Committee in the Spring. A seasoned request could then be presented at Annual Sessions 2021.
3. The name of Ministry and Oversight be changed to Ministry and Stewardship. Ministry and Oversight brought this request to plenary two years ago, but Meeting did not reach unity on it. The concern was based on the pain the name brings up for some Friends because of historical connotations of the words "oversight" and "overseer", as well as a desire for a name that more faithfully describes the work of the committee. Our discomfort with the old name persists, and we think we may, as a Yearly Meeting, have new Light to bring to this.
4. Monthly Meetings read and discuss Robin DiAngelo's book *White Fragility* together as a way of encouraging dialog about systemic racism and its effects within the Society of Friends.

The Committee consists of Kylin Navarro-Burger (Berkeley), Gail Eastwood (Humboldt), Valerie Nuttman (Santa Cruz), Thistle West (Strawberry Creek), Elena Rosales-Anderson (Redwood Forest), Eric Sabelman (Palo Alto), Jorge Morales (San Jose), Shan Cretin (Santa Monica, co-clerk) and Jim Summers (La Jolla, co-clerk).