

Pacific Yearly Meeting Elder to the Presiding Clerk Report to Representative Committee 2020

SUMMARY

This is a report from the Elder of the Presiding Clerk of Pacific Yearly Meeting. In this report, I offer a description of the Elder-Clerk relationship for the third year of the Clerk's service, from Representative Committee, March 2020 to Representative Committee, February/March 2021.

How to write about this year without using superlatives? The world simply changed about two weeks after I submitted my report for 2020. I did not attend Representative Committee in Visalia; Sandy did. I accompanied her by telephone and prayer. I was dismayed to not be attending, and was not sure I had made the right decision because it was so early in the pandemic. It was not yet called a pandemic. That was to come shortly after and 2020 became historical.

In the whirlwind that was 2020, our relationship as clerk and elder was a grounding, an anchor. We continued to meet weekly for about ninety minutes on Zoom. We began with worship and then entered into prayerful holding for discernment, for empathy, for revealing of deeper truth. Our Zoom meetings melded into a Zoom world, a virtual Annual Session, and now an upcoming virtual Representative Committee Meeting and Annual Session for 2021.

The deep and abiding spiritual commitment that this accompaniment has brought, has not been dissipated by the virtual mandate. Sandy is carrying her third year as a clerk with humility, love and a strength born of an increasing turning to God for guidance.

As an elder this has been a time of embracing more fully the many facets of the eldering role. Accompaniment goes beyond the time spent with Sandy, the time spent in formal activities of the Yearly Meeting. Accompaniment becomes a lens, a filter, a way of being in the world. An integral part of that is seeking more readily God's guidance and God's consolation.

Perhaps more difficult but therefore important to acknowledge is the moments of insecurity I have experienced about my performance as an elder. This has been particularly true with all that Sandy has had to face given the demands of this unusual year on her clerking. As she received the guidance and care from many seasoned Friends, it was easy for me to question my ability to serve. Was I really needed? Perhaps Zoom meetings contributed to the sense of disquiet I sometimes felt.

However, a wise soul once said that faith contains the seed of its own doubt. From this vantage point it is clear to me that those moments of doubt often led to a turning toward God and thus a strengthening of faith. In this third year, the strengths and doubts have led to an emerging sense of another facet of our elder/clerk relationship. I have come to experience accompaniment as a triangle not a dyad. It is possible to sink into the knowing that **we** are being held, **we** are being accompanied. I believe that this knowing is the ground on which we come to together as we enter our final months together.

This strange year, this powerful work, this faith and doubt, this spiritual growth, this sense of the nearness of God in so much of it all, leaves me humbled. And deeply grateful for the opportunity that has been given me to serve as elder to the presiding clerk of Pacific Yearly Meeting, Sandy Kewman.

The Elder to the Clerk is Dorothy Henderson (Grass Valley).