

Pacific Yearly Meeting Ministry Committee Report to Annual Session 2021

SUMMARY

Like many others, Ministry Committee members have had personal losses this year, and have generally felt the weight of the state of the world. Given low available energy, we've had to really focus our work on what we are most called to. How has Spirit been moving among us? What is rising up as most important?

We bring to annual session a proposal for an administrative position (attached).

Report

We continue our work on nurturing community. Two new subcommittees rose up from the body and we are working to support them: Friends of Color Subcommittee, and Indigenous Concerns Subcommittee. We are excited to see how these subcommittees develop and hope that we can be of service to them, as these are quite clearly corporate leadings. We continue support and appreciation of the work of the Racial Justice Subcommittee. The work of these three subcommittees is foundational to Pacific Yearly Meeting's intention to become an anti-racist faith organization, an upwelling of Spirit and Love among us.

We also recognized the importance of coming together as a larger group, to worship and to be in the presence of Spirit. We hosted an online Meeting for Worship on the eve of the inauguration, and an online Meeting for Grieving.

The opportunity for such larger online gatherings grew out of the challenges of the pandemic time. We are able to gather in the Spirit on Zoom because we had a great need to gather. As a result of the need, multitudes of Friends everywhere became competent Zoom users, creating unsuspected new opportunities, new pathways for Spirit to move in. Barriers of geography no longer exist in the same way. This development has allowed the Ministry Committee and other yearly meeting committees to serve the monthly meetings and their members and attenders more fully year-round with workshops, worship groups and called meetings. As we write, Ministry Committee is helping with the planning of a second online annual gathering. And yet there are losses that come with the opportunity—people who don't or can't connect online, and the loss of everything we all get from actual physical presence with one another, the many informal interactions that deepen our relationships. How different might our committee's year have been if we'd had our usual weekend in-person meetings?

And of course we work to maintain connections with distant Meetings and with those that do not fall within a quarterly meeting. The opportunities of the pandemic year have enriched us with an increased presence in our online midst of distant Friends.

We continue to search for better ways to accomplish the work of the Yearly Meeting. We have been considering what are the essential tasks, and what are the things that if we could dream bigger we would like to see happen. Are we being called to do less? Or to do things differently from how they have been done in the past? We bring to annual session a proposal for an administrative position (attached). We hope that what emerges from the consideration of this proposal will serve the monthly meetings, the members and attenders, and the yearly meeting committees in ways that free over-burdened volunteers to focus on what Spirit is calling us to do.

The Committee consists of James Summers, Shan Cretin, Rolene Walker, Jorge Morales, Jay Cash, Eric Sabelman, Valerie Nuttmann (co-clerk), and Gail Eastwood (co-clerk).

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Attachment to Ministry Committee Report:

Proposal to Hire a Part-time Administrative Assistant

Ministry Committee recommends that Pacific Yearly Meeting hire an administrative assistant to further the work of the Yearly Meeting for an experimental period. This would be a half-time paid position with benefits, funded for two years from the hiring date.

This position would relieve the burden on overloaded volunteers. It would foster better communication and stronger connections throughout the yearly meeting. It would enable the work of our committees.

This position can be paid for without raising Meeting contributions by drawing upon unspent travel funds remaining on the books from the last year.

Given uncertainties associated with the Covid-19 pandemic, the Committee recommends that decisions about extending the position and future be addressed at the end of those two years when the experiment is evaluated, more public health information is available, and Friends have a better idea of how they will be meeting.

Ministry recommends the decisions about hiring process, supervision, budgeting be delegated to the Presiding Clerk and the Ministry Committee, in consultation with the Treasurer, Finance Committee, and the Youth Programs Coordinating Committee (YPCC).

Process

After early discussions with the Clerk and systematic attempts to foster conversation at the Monthly Meeting level, Ministry Committee and the Clerk brought the proposal to the Yearly Meeting at Annual Sessions 2020, followed by a Threshing Meeting before Representative Committee the following spring. The issue was discussed at Representative Committee, and Ministry Committee was charged with bringing an updated proposal back to Annual Sessions 2021.

This is the requested proposal, developed in consultation with the Presiding Clerk, Assistant to the Clerk, Incoming Presiding Clerk, the Treasurer and the Clerk of Finance Committee.

Background Considerations

The Need for Assistance:

Volunteer resources available to Pacific Yearly Meeting are decreasing as the needs are increasing.

For the last five years, the responsibilities of the Clerk have grown, and the Assistant to the Clerk has become a hub of communication and organization for our community. The role has grown beyond what one volunteer can reasonably manage.

The Youth Programs Coordinating team has experienced an increased need for communications and administrative support so they can keep the focus on the youth of our community.

Decreased Volunteer Help:

It is common for Nominating Committee to have difficulty in filling positions.

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Our community is aging and shrinking. Illness and death take their toll. We can no longer rely on women working at home, retirees with good pensions and academics or farmers with seasonal down times. The stressed economy has narrowed the options further as Friends work long hours or multiple jobs. Increased need for technical expertise limits the ability of some to volunteer in critical positions. We often work those who do volunteer until they are weary and burnt out.

Simplicity:

The essence of the simplicity testimony is to order our lives so that we have room to hear and heed the voice of Spirit. We believe that this position will help yearly and monthly meetings to support work that we've clearly been called to: childrens programs and youth programs, racial justice concerns, greater inclusion of far-flung meetings and members—and more.

Pacific Yearly Meeting has undoubtedly grown more complex in its operations over the last few years.. Operating as a Yearly Meeting between the annual in-person gatherings has increased the need for communication structures, some electronic—requiring such things as up-to-date directories, useful and accessible websites, organization and publicity for regional gatherings, registration for events, and coordinating calls between officers and committee clerks. Being unable to meet in person has emphasized these needs. Meanwhile Zoom has made it *simple* for meetings and yearly meeting committees to share workshops on clerking, racial justice, eldering, Unity With Nature's Braiding Sweetgrass worship group—with more possibilities in the works. In other words, the “more complex” structures we've adopted are making it simpler for people to offer and participate in these parts of our work.

Precedents

We are not alone in facing this problem. Ministry Committee and the Clerk surveyed many other Yearly Meetings and Quaker organizations finding that many Yearly Meetings hire administrative help. Canada Yearly Meeting has both a full time General Secretary and an office manager. North Pacific Yearly Meeting pays for several part time administrative roles. Intermountain Yearly Meeting is going through a discernment process similar to ours, for similar reasons.

Expenses

The cost of a 20 hour/week position is projected by Finance Committee to be about \$30,000/year, consisting of a \$20,800 salary plus benefits.

The Treasurer and Clerk of Finance Committee agree that Yearly Meeting has enough cash on hand to fully fund this proposal for two years from unspent travel funds. The money has been transferred to reserves. It appears likely that holding fewer in-person committee meetings due to increased use of Zoom even after Covid restrictions are lifted, will continue to produce savings to the Yearly Meeting. This paid position can be paid for without increasing Monthly Meeting contributions.

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The Job

A paid administrative assistant would be expected to do such tasks as:

1. Manage PacYM Zoom accounts
 - a. Set up Zoom meetings on behalf of Officers and Committees
 - b. Maintain publicly-available calendar of PacYM Zoom meetings (title only, no Zoom links)
 - c. Post and maintain the process for requesting a Zoom meeting on the PacYM website
2. Manage the database (this task may change when the online database is implemented, possibly becoming the responsibility of an independent database manager)
 - a. Maintain a database with the name & email address of all Officers, Committee Clerks, Representative & Delegates to outside organizations, Monthly Meeting Clerks, and MM Reps to PacYM
 - b. Periodically send emails to MM Clerks & MM Reps to verify that they are still serving in that role.
 - c. Update Officers, Committee Clerks, Representative & Delegates to outside organizations after a new slate is approved at Annual Session and throughout the year as changes to slate are approved.
3. Support Coordinating Team Calls
 - a. Send out an email to all Officers, Committee Clerks, and Representative & Delegates to outside organizations after new Nominating slate is approved at Annual Session with description of Coordinating Teams and list of who is on which team.
 - b. Create & send Doodle polls to schedule Coordinating team meetings.
 - c. Send agenda & Zoom link to each Coordinating Team member in advance of each meeting.
 - d. Take notes during meetings. Once Presiding Clerk has approved the notes, distribute the notes document to the Coordinating Team.
4. Support Representative Committee
 - a. Identify location for in-person RepCom meetings.
 - b. Create the RepCom Registration form and post on the website.

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- c. Draft and send the Call to Representative Committee in December. Include link to the registration form and the deadline for reports (usually 2 weeks before the start of RepCom).
 - d. Post the template for Reports to Representative Committee on the PacYM website.
 - e. Receive reports and work with submitters to address any problems with the reports.
 - f. Work with the website editors to get the reports posted.
 - g. Attend RepCom and be available to assist the Presiding Clerk as needed.
 - h. Publicize deadline for reports to Annual Session at RepCom.
5. Support Annual Session
- a. Email the Call to Annual Session to Officers, Committee Clerks, Reps & Delegates, and MM Reps as soon as the Presiding Clerk has it ready.
 - b. Work with the Presiding Clerk to create a draft AS schedule in collaboration with the Assistant to the clerk
 - c. Publicize the deadline for reports and post the template for Reports to Annual Session on the PacYM website.
 - d. Send out a “Registration is Open” email when Friends can begin registering for AS.
 - e. Receive reports and work with submitters to address any problems with the reports.
 - f. Collaborate with the website editors to get the reports posted.
 - g. Draft and send the “2nd email” to all AS registrants with information they will need prior to AS.
 - h. Attend Annual Session and be available to assist the Presiding Clerk as needed.
 - i. Attend an evaluation meeting with all Committee Clerks at the close of AS.
 - j. Send out a post-session email to all AS registrants
6. Possible New Projects
- a. Newsletter: assemble and distribute a periodic newsletter to PacYM membership
 - b. Committee & Treasurer Support: assist Clerks of PacYM committees with administrative tasks such as meeting scheduling, organization of committee records, tracking insurance policies, and fulfilling corporate filings to IRS and State of California and more.