

Clerk's Call – Pacific Yearly Meeting - 2022

Beloved Community: What Does It Mean to Belong: to Ourselves, to Each Other, to the Earth?

“God has called us together, led us together from all sorts of disparate backgrounds into a community of souls seeking to live lives obedient to the Light, lives under the guidance of the Spirit.” David Johnson, Surrendering Into Silence: Quaker Prayer Cycles, p.50.

“God's dream is that you and I and all of us will realize that we are all family, that we are made for togetherness, for goodness, and for compassion... Enemies are always friends waiting to be made.” Desmond Tutu.

“Diversity is not just about who is in the room but about how we share space and power and relate to each other across cultural gaps.” Kazu Haga, Healing Resistance: A Radically Different Response to Harm.

I am writing to you after the Russian invasion of Ukraine, with a heavy heart. What does **beloved community** look like when people are fleeing for their lives, while their homes and everything familiar to them is crumbling all around them?

Closer to home, what does the planet look like amidst sea level rise, wild fires, atmospheric rivers and a global pandemic, now in its third year? What role do we play?

The yearly meeting Finance Committee has declared our 75th year a year of Jubilee. Our reserves are unusually high, and we will be using a “pay as led” approach to this year’s gathering, with confidence that we’ll be able to cover any expenses above what Friends can contribute. All youth 18 and under will be “free,” and the message is loud and clear, please come. Jubilee is a time when debts are forgiven, the land lies fallow, and we envision a real re-distribution of wealth. What a perfect way of imagining how to build a more inclusive, post-colonial yearly meeting. **What changes do we need to make to re-distribute power and expectations so that all are truly welcome and able to be full participants, growing and learning from each other?**

At Representative Committee we heard an urgent cry from our Children’s Program Committee that they cannot mount a program alone for our children unless other adults step up. It cannot be done by the few people who have served us valiantly in this capacity for so many years. They need help. Our children need to know we care about them and want them in our community. The teens made it clear that we need to meet in person, at least partly, this year.

We will be doing that, at Mt. Madonna Center, in Watsonville California, July 22-27 in person, and also joined by our zoom attenders. In other words, we will experiment with a blended meeting. And people are already stepping up. I am asking every yearly meeting committee to consider whether they can design one activity with the 6-12 year olds that demonstrates what your committee does. Once when I was on the Nominating Committee for my Meeting, two of us went to the First Day School and led a session on finding our gifts. What other kinds of activities would committees want to share with these precious ones, so they feel a part of our community and know they matter?

For me the most creative roads to fundamental change can be found in indigenous teachings, and in Mother Nature. Toward that end I have invited three Friends to be our keynote panel: Marlene Coach-Eisenstein (Honolulu), Peni Hall (Strawberry Creek), and Keith Runyan (Santa Cruz), moderated by Diego Navarro (Santa Cruz). They will share their experiences of the PacYM community and some ways they see where changes could be made.

“Sacred is about more than just sacred places and sacred sites. It is about who we are as human beings. It’s the waters. It’s the plant life. It’s about being in relationship again with everything that’s alive...So it’s about relationship and how we are all here and exist together.” Corinna Gould, a Lisjan elder in Oakland, California, as quoted in Inflamed: Deep Medicine and the Anatomy of Injustice. By Rupa Marya & Raj Patel, p. 186

This deep work, in deeply difficult times, will take courage, vision, and trust in Spirit to find new ways of living our faith. This is an all-hands-on-deck time. Join us, on zoom or in person, to be part of the joy of reimagining!

“There is a Passamaquoddy word *mawiyane* – let us venture together...And a word that I used to hear from the Elders when I was a kid was *mawoqekapuwiyane* – let us stand together. We have a lot of different words for “gathering,” but they all have this sense of inclusiveness: let us, *together*. When we gather we become vulnerable, and to me the lessons that we have yet to learn are hidden in that process.” Wayne, from the book Gatherings: Reimagining Indigenous-Settler Relations, by Shirley N. Hager and Mawopiyane, p. 145.

Laura Magnani, clerk
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