

Pacific Yearly Meeting

Children's Program Committee

Report to Annual Session (AS) 2023

The Children's Program Committee (CPC) appreciates what Pacific Yearly Meeting (PacYM) is doing. We support the Clerk's call to action and are glad to see all the work that people are doing to reach out to the younger generations. Along with this, we want to acknowledge the practical things that PacYM is doing, such as encouraging families to attend with no cost for the children. PacYM has budgeted over \$15,000 both to run the Children' Program for Annual Session, and to enable us to reach out to families during the year and facilitate friendships among children and parents in our extended community.

The Children's Program Committee is feeling our way as we fill a gap left by the Religious Education for Children Committee. As we try new things, we find that we sometimes have a positive impact, and sometimes we need to re-evaluate. Learning how to rebuild a program after the effects of COVID is challenging, and this is made more difficult by the downward trend in children's programs throughout the Yearly Meeting. For example, PacYM hosted a field trip at Redwood Forest Friends Meeting for two years in a row. We found that families who were peripherally involved in the Meeting came, and some families who were just starting to attend felt welcomed and celebrated. We are looking forward to another Art in the Garden at RFFM, and we have three new families who we hope to see there. Other Monthly Meetings, however, have been unsuccessful in restarting their own children's program, due to low or sporadic attendance. We continue to look for ways to connect and support them.

As you can see, not every field trip has been successful, and we have had to cancel two ambitious ones which we had planned for the spring. We are finding that the timing is crucial for our families, and that it's very important for this committee to support the Quarterlies. CPC is in close contact with the College Park Quarterly Meeting, and we believe that our support is strengthening the Children's Program there. We are beginning to make the necessary connections to expand this support to include the Southern Quarter and to reach out to the remote areas. However, rebuilding a program that is in near collapse is hard work, and can be lonely. Having a place to talk over concerns and share successes is important for assuring that we continue to be able to staff our various programs.

The COVID quarantine taught us that children need face to face time with people. We understand that the hybrid option is important for many, but we acknowledge that Zoom does not work for either children or teens.

This year we plan to reach out to families to get a better idea of what they need, and we are hosting an Interest Group on Spiritual Parenting so that we can talk about how to begin having important conversations with our children regarding our spiritual lives.

We also encourage everyone to reflect on what they are doing to support children, youth and families in our community. We hope that, as part of that process, you will join us in the afternoon activities at annual session that are designed for people of all ages. We also are providing quiet and contemplative art activities during the Meeting for Memorials that are available for anyone of any age.

Our next upcoming field trip is an overnight camping weekend planned for August 19-20, at Walker Creek Ranch. At this time, it is looking as though we will have a good turnout of people of all ages willing to focus on our children and youth. This is giving us renewed hope and energy to keep on traveling down this vital road.

Again, this committee is grateful for the support of our community, and we look forward to seeing you at our afternoon events!

Members of the Children's Program Committee: Molly Bishop (co-clerk), Rhea Farley (co-clerk), Theresa Cox, Sandy Farley, and Delcy Steffy.

Ex Officio Member: Melanie Cantu, Children's Program Coordinator, and Keenan Lorenzato, Youth Programs Coordinator.