

Pacific Yearly Meeting  
**Ministry Committee**  
Report to Annual Session (AS) 2023

**Action Item:**

We bring to plenary this year a proposal to continue the half-time paid position of Administrative Assistant on an ongoing basis.

**Narrative**

**What a challenging year!** Looking at the big picture, our house is on fire. In the planetary picture we see climate disaster looming, war and weapons gobbling up people and precious resources, threat of nuclear destruction looming, hate-based politics threatening our democracy. Zooming in to the level of Pacific Yearly Meeting, we see that we are dwindling--dying off and not replacing ourselves. (CPQM reports that 60% of members are over the age of 70—think about that!) We are not what we were twenty years ago, ten years ago, five years ago. Not what we will be five or ten years from now. On the very micro level, our little committee is understaffed, with a number of members facing significant health challenges or health issues in the family. This understaffing mirrors what is going on in many committees and monthly meetings. All this is happening at a time when the spiritual wealth we have been entrusted with is most sorely needed. Meanwhile, we are aware of many gifted young Friends who are deeply connected with their Quaker community and active in Quaker activities and service. Their numbers are don't count in the statistics above, due to limitations in our "membership" structure.

**Transformation:** To look from a different perspective, we could say that it's a transformative time for Pacific Yearly Meeting, a time of rapid and unstoppable change. A time that offers opportunities to recreate ourselves around essentials. The younger voices we seek to center at this gathering—vital and dynamic voices, some with prophetic power—are the promise and the beginning of the unformed future, about which we can only predict that it will be radically different from the vanishing past.

Some signs of transformation that we see in the present carry promise. In the context of the work of the Ministry Committee, much creative life shines in our subcommittees: Racial Justice, Eldering, and Indigenous Concerns. As meetings on all levels re-examine and seek to simplify their structures, new forms evolve on their own. The Ministry subcommittees involve no nominating process, no terms. They resemble long-term working groups, mostly self-selected and entirely self-directed. They are doing beautiful spirit-led work. They are liaised with Ministry and supported by the committee, but the subcommittees themselves lead the work and have the creative spark. Look for their individual reports on the work they are

involved in, each in their own way working toward transformative change in the larger body.

**Admin Assistant Proposal** As a body, we have considered it useful and even necessary to pay people to do work that we used to be able to do on a volunteer basis, beginning with a Youth Programs Coordinator. We acknowledge our reduced capacity as well as the changing demands of a changing time. Two years ago in plenary, the body agreed to a two-year trial of hiring a part-time administrative assistant. **We bring to you this year a proposal to continue this position on an ongoing basis.** Bronwen Hillman has to our eyes been invaluable in the ongoing business of the yearly meeting and in the preparation of the annual gathering. Her work supports and enables the work of many volunteers.

**Sacred Space Process:** Ministry Committee this year has been working with the Racial Justice Subcommittee to discern next steps in responding to harm that happens in our midst. Once the gate was opened for people to acknowledge harm as it happens to people of color, people from other affected groups—LGBTQ+, mentally ill, disabled—started to speak up. As a body, we have a desire to heal wounds and prevent further wounding. We offer to you a document on *Sacred Space Healing*, (included as an appendix to this report that expresses something about where we are in our understanding of how our community is healed. We acknowledge in this document that we are beginners in this: “We notice that, as beginners, we do not necessarily start out being very good at this. We will continue to make mistakes, and we expect to learn from them. *We want to stop the harm and heal the wounds!*” We invite focus on the power of deep listening in worship to heal, transform, and direct us. In our document we attempt very briefly to speak to deeply felt concerns that we have listened to this year. We invite further conversation; contact clerk Gail Eastwood, [eastwood@asis.com](mailto:eastwood@asis.com).

**Yearly Meeting Membership:** We see that there is much vital Quaker life outside the frame of monthly meetings and committees! Younger folks not counted in our membership statistics are actively connected to their Quaker community, but not necessarily to a monthly meeting. They may be serving in important yearly meeting roles; many are living their Quaker values in service to the wider world. Why does our current structure not work for some people who truly belong to this yearly meeting? Is there a need on both sides to acknowledge the belonging? This year Ministry Committee formed a working group on direct membership in the yearly meeting, seeking to satisfy needs of those people for whom our current structure of membership does not work. A statement from this working group about their understandings will be posted to the Ministry Committee website soon. There will be a hybrid interest group on membership in the yearly meeting at annual session. If you'd like to participate in this ongoing discussion, contact Gail Eastwood [eastwood@asis.com](mailto:eastwood@asis.com).

**Annual Session:** As of this writing, we're engrossed in preparations for annual session in July. This hybrid event poses new challenges to be met by a dispersed

crew of volunteers on different committees and assignments, loosely coordinated, each working on their own area of responsibility. It's always a miracle when we pull it off!

2023 Gail Eastwood, Humboldt (2018), **Clerk**

2023 Stan Searl, Santa Monica (2021)

2024 Robin DuRant, Orange Grove (2021)

2024 Rita Comes Whitney, Palo Alto (2021)

2025 Lee Sisson, Orange Grove (2022 RC)

2025 Gail Coonen, Humboldt (2022)

2025 Kathryn Neale Manalo, Berkeley (2022)