

Pacific Yearly Meeting
Children's Program Committee
Report to RepCom 2024

We had a successful program at Mount Madonna last year, despite the many challenges we faced at that site, and we are glad to be looking at another venue for the coming year. We hope that having PacYM in Whittier will encourage families in the Southern Quarter to attend and get to know children from College Park Quarterly Meeting. These friendships can be very sweet, long lasting and important both for the children involved, and for the stability of the organization.

Much of our success last year was based on our wonderful staff. But finding both teaching staff and program managers is an ongoing struggle. Instead of having to turn people away, we barely reach our goals and as of this writing, we are looking for a few more qualified people.

In addition to finding staff, there are current committee members and organizers who want to retire, after having served for many years. The Nominating Committee is working hard to find people for our committee, and the member who joined us this year is wonderful. But we still need more members who are younger and ready to take over children's programming.

We are no longer organizing field trips, and instead we are looking for ways to encourage Monthly Meetings and the Quarters to engage with families. As part of this effort, the Children's Program Committee organized an Interest group at PacYM last year for the first time, and we would like to do that again this year.

We have two concerns that require the support and careful consideration of Pacific Yearly Meeting this year.

First, is the scheduling of multi-generational activities. We believe it's important for adults to have some time to be playful, and there needs to be structured time for those who are in plenaries all day to get to know the young people who attend children's and youth activities, However, multi-generational activities are still sparsely attended, even though the people who do attend them find them to be rewarding, restful and refreshing. These activities can be a good way for people who are new to Pacific Yearly Meeting to find a time to relax and get to know people, but they may never find their way to them if they are not attended by the people they have met in various meetings. This year, the scheduling of this

time will need careful planning because of the change of the dinner schedule. A new time that is dedicated to reaching out to young people and their families is important to the task of inclusion.

We would also like to encourage more informal discussion between adults and kids. Why don't people who don't have children at Annual Session sit down and eat with the children and their families? This doesn't take an organizing committee, but it does require that each one of us step outside our comfort zone, to meet with people we don't currently know and to befriend someone beyond our generation.

And second, and possibly most important, we would like to propose a worship time dedicated to welcoming babies born into the Pacific Yearly Meeting in 2023-24, and to the children of families who have recently become members. Our Meeting for Memorials is a beautiful tribute to those who have enriched our community. But we think we make a mistake when we always look backward. It could help new parents feel included and appreciated as their children are held in worship. Gratitude is a deeply nourishing spiritual practice -- not only gratitude for those who have contributed in the past, but gratitude for those who are joining us.

Respectfully submitted by Molly Bishop, Clerk, Children's Program Committee
With support from Rhea Farley and Kate Watkins