

General Secretary's Report

June 9, 2012

Dear Friends, our Yearly Meeting staff is getting smaller. It's not easy to get smaller, but it's work we're doing and there's more work ahead of us.

In my report this morning I'd like to address two aspects of our getting smaller. First, I'd like to name and acknowledge the members of our staff who have left, or will be leaving. Second, I'd like to share with you some of the ideas we've been working on so to support the work of the Yearly Meeting with a much smaller staff.

[At this point in my report, go to the last page which is the list that I read aloud of staff members who will be leaving during this calendar year on accounts of PYM's reduced financial resources.]

The second aspect of my report related to our getting smaller has to do with finding ways to support the work of monthly meetings with a smaller staff. I'd like to share several of the ideas we've been working on and which are almost, but not quite, in a final form.

Thread Groups

First, we are putting energy into how we can support opportunities for Friends within monthly meetings to learn from and support each other in areas of common concern.

When we look at our monthly meetings, we find that many, if not most, have areas of concern that include:

- Pastoral Care
- Peace and Concerns
- Religious Life for Young People
- Outreach
- Worship and Ministry

For the purposes of our PYM staff work, we are naming these areas of concerns, "threads." For example, across our monthly meetings, we might talk about a pastoral care thread, a peace and concerns thread, a religious life for young people thread and so on.

Christie Duncan-Tessmer, our Associate Secretary for Program, has been talking with standing committees and working groups about creating opportunities for connecting members of monthly meetings according to their interest in a particular thread of the life of the monthly meeting.

How can we do this?

e-Newsletters

First, we want to create communications opportunities. We will be originating a family of up to five e-newsletters, each one speaking to a different thread; for example, an e-newsletter for Pastoral Care, an e-newsletter for Peace and Concerns, an e-newsletter for Worship and Ministry. Each of these e-newsletters will come out five times a year- roughly bi-monthly- and they will be designed to support Friends in meetings who are called to the work of one of the named threads.

The e-newsletters will be designed to bring us together across monthly meetings and allow us to share the work that we are engaged in, the wisdom among us and the resources that support us. Each e-newsletter will target those within our monthly meetings who are concerned with that particular thread. For example, the Peace and Concerns e-newsletter might go to members of peace and concerns committees in all of our monthly meetings, and anyone else who might want a copy.

Content for the e-newsletters will be suggested and recruited by relevant committees, meetings and staff.

Thread Gatherings

A second way we propose to support areas of common interest in our monthly meetings is to have what might be called “thread gatherings.” Our vision is that these might happen once a year for each thread group. For example, an annual gathering for the Pastoral Care thread group, or an annual gathering for the Worship and Ministry thread group.

A thread gathering would be an opportunity to increase the grounding and skills base of Friends around a particular program area. They would offer the opportunity for Friends from across the Yearly Meeting to come together for a shared sense of community and calling.

Administrative Procedures Handbook for Committees and Working Groups

Another project we are working on to make it easier for us to get smaller is a handbook which we are calling an “Administrative Procedures Handbook for Committees and Working Groups.”

The reality of our new situation is that staff will not be able to do all of the things that staff have done in the past and this will mean that committee members, volunteering their time, will need to step up to some of the tasks formerly done by staff.

In the past, we have organized staff support by committee. That is, each committee or working group that had staff support would have a single staff person

assigned to it. That single staff person would do all of the staff support or see that it was done. Our new approach will be to organize staff support by function, not by committee.

What are some of these staff support functions?

- Reserving meeting spaces
- Printing and copying meeting materials
- Arranging phone and video hook-ups
- Arranging child care
- Taking and submitting minutes
- Submitting check requests
- Travel reimbursement requests

Going forward, committee clerks or members will be asked to more directly involved in doing of these tasks, or for arranging for these tasks to be done. For example, presently a staff person, assigned to a committee, might be asked to arrange a conference call. That staff person would then need to go to another staff person who knows how to do that. Under the proposed new procedures, the committee clerk or member would be asked to contact directly the person who will actually arrange the conference call. The new “Administrative Procedures Handbook” will be the guidebook clerks and members on what to do and whom to call or email.

I’d like to thank Christie Duncan-Tessmer, our Associate Secretary for Program for her extraordinary work on these ideas. They have originated with her and in the first instance they are her ideas. Christie and I have worked on them together, to be sure, but it is her creative muse which has been at the source.

Three others aspects

I’d like to mention three other aspects of our getting smaller.

Laying Down Meeting Relations Program

First, we will be laying down the meeting relations program. This program had as a vision that each of our 103 meetings would have a staff liaison who would have a regular and ongoing relationship with each meeting. We were planning to use Friends Center staff and the Quarterly Meeting Coordinators to implement the program. In our new situation we simply don’t have the person power to do this. In fact, the program never got fully operational and there is a sadness for me because of the continuing need I perceive to find ways to connect our meetings with the yearly meeting and with each other. The thread group idea that I mentioned earlier in my report may be one way to do this on a less labor intensive basis.

Reduction in Friends Center Office Space

Second, we have been working with Friends Center to further reduce our office space. The upshot is that Friends Center has found a tenant that will rent some of our space and this tenant will be fully moved in by September. We did a previous release of office space, and together we expect that we will be able to reduce our Friends Center rental costs by \$60,000 to \$70,000 annually.

Letter to Members of the Yearly Meeting

Third, in consultation with our Treasurer, and the clerks of Financial Stewardship and Financial Oversight Working Group, I've been working on a letter to all members of the Yearly Meeting which will detail where we are now in the resolution of our financial crisis. The letter would be a bookend to the January 4 which outlined the crisis.

The letter will lay out what we've accomplished and where we are. It's a good story and one that needs to be told.

Friends should know that I'm feeling very strong about where we are. In my view, we are in a stronger place financially than at any previous time in my tenure as General Secretary. It's a message that needs to get out to our meetings and members.

I had hoped that the letter could have been sent by yesterday, but the new target is by the middle of next week.

That, clerk, would be my report.

Respectfully submitted,

Arthur M. Larrabee

[Staff list, next page]

Staff Who Have Left This Year (Since January 1), or Who Will Be Leaving at the End of June, or by December 31, On Account of PYM's Reduced Financial Resources

Alphabetically by Last Name

June 9, 2012

Priscilla Adams	Regional Secretary for Quaker Concerns (Haddonfield Quarterly Meeting)
Phil Anthony	Salem Quarterly Meeting Coordinator
Cookie Caldwell	Young Friends Coordinator
Grace Cooke	Friends in Education Coordinator
Michael Gagne	Eco-justice Organizer
Kaye Henley	Administrative Assistant for Development
Gary Jackson	Maintenance person the Arch Street Meeting House
Beth Lawn	Concord Quarterly Meeting Coordinator
Hannah Mayer	Volunteer Coordinator
Tammy Nguyen	Accountant
Jess Purvis	Administrative Assistant for Business and Finance
Marie Ryan	Caln Quarterly Meeting Coordinator
Carol Strawson	Director of the Burlington Meeting House and Conference Center
Wade Wright	Upper Susquehanna Quarterly Meeting Coordinator
Jay Worrall	Arch Street Interpreter and Volunteer Coordinator

In addition, two staff members are staying on at reduced hours, going from full time to 3/5 time:

Nick Gutowski	Grants Associate
Naman Hampton	Web Content Manager

I honor the people I've mentioned. They are my colleagues. I acknowledge and thank them for their work on behalf of our Yearly Meeting. They have served us well and it is with regret that their service to our Yearly Meeting has, or will, come to an end.