

## North Pacific Yearly Meeting Annual Session 2018

University of Puget Sound, Tacoma, WA

Action Minutes, Eighth Plenary Session

July 28, 2018; 8:30 am – 10:00 am

Lucretia Humphrey began with reading, into our worship, a passage from Faith and Practice about the support of the Spirit and the community as we walk through our fears.

**The minutes from our Fifth Plenary Session were read and approved, with corrections of several details in the Outreach and Visitation report. We were asked to read the posted minutes of record from other plenary session and advise the recording clerk of needed corrections.**

### Sharing of Epistles (Amanda Franklin)

These readings are intended to focus on passages about racism, which were plentiful.

#### Australia Quakers

Australian Quakers again felt connected to the wider Quaker community when American Friends' epistles told of their challenge in responding to white privilege and Ramallah Friends of their continued struggle in this their 50<sup>th</sup> year under military occupation. With a bag packed full of funeral notices representing the weekly heartache that is common across many Aboriginal families and communities, the Backhouse lecturers spoke of the continuing consequences, injustices and trauma of colonisation.

#### Britain Yearly Meeting

Since our last Yearly Meeting our nations have experienced increasing uncertainty and insecurity. Inequality has become vividly apparent. We are distressed by the trashing of our planet, and angry at the greed, ruthlessness, violence and lies which blight the lives of so many. "What do you mean, says God, that you grind the faces of my poor?" (Isaiah 3:15) In this fractured world, how can we respond? What does Love require of us? We ourselves are part of the problem. Many are too rich. We damage the land, the sea, and all living creatures. We are stealing the future. Change is urgent. We need to recognize our own selfishness and privilege: to be changed ourselves, to live as if the Kingdom of God were already fulfilled.

#### Canadian Yearly Meeting

We were encouraged to build harmonious relationships with our environment and surrounding communities. Friends participated in a service project to protect the local watershed, and nurtured our relations with the Maskwacis First Nation through mutual visits. We were also urged to communicate our faith openly. This year's session brought a means to do so: there was much excitement about the minute from Canadian Friends Service Committee detailing how we can take action in support of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which examined the cultural genocide experienced by Canada's Aboriginal peoples.

#### Fellowship of Friends of African Descent

We then resumed with unprogrammed worship during which our clerk, Ayesha Imani, turned our attention to the business of the Fellowship. We heard a report on the Fellowship sponsored trip of 35 people of African descent to Ghana, West Africa. The celebration of that trip continued into the evening dinner session during which time there was a slideshow of the various activities and venues of the trip including two inspiring visits to Hill House Friends Meeting, an unprogrammed meeting in Accra. Several

members of the delegation to Ghana shared the moving experience and sense of homecoming they felt when they set their foot on their ancestral lands for the first time. They also shared the lingering pain of visiting the slave fort in Elmina where their ancestors were beaten, raped and tortured before being forced through the “door of no return” to be taken across the ocean in slave ships... During its business meeting, the Fellowship began an insightful discussion about the importance of addressing issues of structural racism, self-determination and community support. A draft minute was considered but it was not ready to be approved. Those in attendance agreed to continue the discussion during the coming year... The Gathering experience was one of celebration and commitment. Although we made commitments to continue what we had begun, we realized that there are many more commitments to be made. Those who attended were inspired by the significant progress the Fellowship had made during the last year in both nurturing Quakers of African descent and reaching out to communities of African descent in both Africa and the United States with a witness for peace. We were energized and looked forward to the continuing work of the Spirit in our lives calling us to do ujima, which is to make our brothers and sisters’ problems our problems, and to solve them together.

### Illinois Yearly Meeting

During the last year, Friends raised concerns of racism and connecting with Muslim communities. Four decades ago, during an interview James Baldwin, the author and social activist replied to television personality Dick Cavett’s query, “Why aren’t Negroes more optimistic? It’s getting so much better.” Baldwin replied, “It’s not a question of what happens to the Negro. The real question is what is going to happen to this country.” His answer still seems relevant today. What could we do to help the country move forward to make it better for black lives? What was the need and what will we do about it? There was a need for more information about being a good ally. This started with active listening and increasing engagement. By visiting new places and having new experiences with an open mind and open heart, Friends can increase their empathy with others whom they may not typically engage with.

### Intermountain Yearly Meeting

Two of our meetings, Mountain View Monthly Meeting in Denver and Albuquerque Monthly Meeting are currently offering sanctuary to immigrants without documentation who are threatened with separation from their families.

### Ireland Yearly Meeting

We heard that some refugees feel like trees that have been uprooted from country to country and they need our welcome and friendship to help them settle in.

### Northern Yearly Meeting

In our plenaries we were encouraged to make sure that our engagement with difficult conversations does not end with this Annual Session. We heed the words from “Courageous Conversations About Race” to stay engaged, expect discomfort, speak our truth and expect and accept non-disclosure. We acknowledge our lack of experience and our need to develop skills to maintain this process. This is not the work of some; it is the work of all. As our children would exclaim, “Everybody’s It.”

### **Reading and Approval of Minutes from the Fifth Plenary Session (Thursday, July 27, 8:30 am – 10: am)**

These minutes were approved with several corrections of fact pertaining to the Outreach and Visitation report.

### **Nominating Committee (Ted Etter)**

The committee now has 17 positions with nominations. Ted clarified the terms of several positions. The nominations were read aloud. On both Outreach and Visitation and for representatives to Friends Committee on

National Legislation (FCNL), there were more people expressing interest than nominations that were needed. Both committees can add people informally for their work.

Friends Responses: One Friend said that it was interesting to hear that some of the positions attract more interest than needed to fill the slate. For example, the activities of our FCNL representatives' over this past year have attracted interest.

**Action: Nominations, as presented, were approved, with gratitude.**

There are 18 vacant positions. Some of these are critical to creating the gathering next year. Some committees will work with reduced numbers. Additional nominations can be approved by Coordinating Committee or Executive Committee. Nominating Committee members can be contacted by individual Friends if an interest in serving on a specific committee arises. Job descriptions can be found on the NPYM website under Structures. Nominating Committee members are Ted Etter, Ethen Perkin, Shannon Perry, Ginger Boyle, and .

Comments: Is our tendency to use acronyms a matter of our mostly being middle class and in the professional world? Could we take the time to spell things out?

From Clerk Lucretia Humphrey: It was a joy to work with the ASPC, especially with Dave Ek as General Arrangements Clerk. Let's help our organization continue its work. Interest can be indicated, with name and contact information, on the evaluation form.

### **Reading of First Draft of the Epistle (Pablo Stanfield)**

Usually we have opportunity to read a more complete version of our epistle. The current draft is posted in several places, including the session office; it should be available on our website. About half the text has been written. We have opportunity to add important ideas or correct significant errors. The committee will meet later today to consider input, with the next version available by dinner tonight. One can leave suggestions in written form that should be specific wording. Our intention is not to summarize the minutes of action and record. This is our message to the world—our experience of where the Spirit is leading us.

Pablo read the first draft of the epistle, noting where it was incomplete.

Suggested additions to the epistle—

One Friend experienced a sense of relief that we did not have a question and answer session after Vanessa Julye's presentation, which would have imposed our emotional labor on her. We must do our own emotional labor.

The struggle in filling committee and leadership positions has been occurring for many years at all meeting levels: yearly, quarterly, and monthly levels.

When Vanessa Julye spoke about white people's tendencies for feeling unsafe when we are feeling uncomfortable, there was a gasp of recognition from the room.

There is an urgency that should be reflected in the epistle---we need to "get after this" corporately and individually.

### **Presentation by Jackie Stillwell, Right Sharing of World's Resources (RSWR)**

Jackie Stillwell is from New England Yearly Meeting and is General secretary of RSWR. She feels blessed to be able to do her work because it is a coming together of her faith and action. RSWR is an independent Quaker nonprofit organization. They award grants around the world. The work is grounded in a sense of stewardship of the world's resources. Many of us have some level of connection with this group.

The group began as the 1% Fund of Friends World Committee on Consultation many years ago. She shared a story of a young man in Kenya whose sister was supported by RSWR. The sister had established a stall to sell vegetables. This stall was very productive and was handed to the brother when his sister went to school. They were able to send all their siblings to school.

RSWR members engage in consciousness-raising work in this country. Jackie asked us to share the love we receive from God.

Comments:

One Friend suggested that with some companies, we can designate funds to RSWR when making purchases.

A Friend spoke about meeting with women who had received loans and who pay back the loans while supporting each other. The money paid back is used to support others in the community rather than reverting back to RSWR itself. Women are the focus because they have traditionally been overlooked and not supported. This is an empowering process for the recipients. Local meetings can choose recipients for gifts through RSWR.

Our session registrar noted that in the past, we have taken part in a simple meal, with funds generated to support RSWR. We do not have that opportunity this year. However, we will make a gift from funds received for this session through Abundant Financing.

A Friend is mindful of the emphasis on people in need in other countries throughout the world. She is concerned that our love is powerful but doesn't know if our images are congruent with that and asks for sensitivity about using images of people who do not truly need our help.

### **Peace and Social Concerns Committee Presentation (Sea Gabriel and Tom Head)**

This year, Angus Breon has created a website for our Peace and Social Concerns. Our meetings are invited to share information for the website. Send items for posting to [sea@sum1.us](mailto:sea@sum1.us) or [t@sum1.us](mailto:t@sum1.us).

Sea Gabriel asked us each to imagine a child we love—how much love, how much we'd be willing to do for that child. Then, think about the last person we saw holding a sign asking for help—how much love, how much we'd be willing to do for that person. We have always worked together to provide resources but also to compete for resources for our children. We are asked to increase our love for our neighbors even at the expense of our own children. Birthright for everyone means being held and loved.

Friends' Responses:

Hoping that her ministry deepens the silence—one Friend spoke of loving our neighbor as ourselves—who is the neighbor? The homeless person, refugee, people who look different from me. So are places in our environment. So is the entire community of life, our sustainers, to whom we owe more than cursory gratitude.

One reason he is a Quaker is because of new revelation—every moment. Infinite power, what is happening here, how we are all connected.

We were asked to reflect on a statement—am I prepared, willing, ready? This Friend has been expecting that someone would change the name of the Ministry and Oversight Committee—would be deeply sorry to leave this session with Oversight attached to the name of that committee. She asks the Clerk to find a way to move toward this change.

People in Hood River have responded to having a regional jail (at Hood River) to take the overflow from the detention center in Tacoma. The name of the responding group meaning "We Are One."

We were thanked for responding with funds for Jubilee House in their distress over loss of their usual funding.

Prepared by Angie Alexander, Recording Clerk