The planning is going along smoothly so far. At the same time, there are a number of differences this year from previous ones. Please be sure the people in your meetings are aware of them.

First, I hope all of your meetings have distributed the brochures about the Annual Session (AS) that were sent to your contact people in February. These are intended especially to generate interest in the AS for people who have not previously been to one, or who have not been to one for a long time.

Our theme this year is “Quaker Craft: Becoming the Quakers the World Needs”. And our Friend-in-Residence is Robin Mohr, Executive Secretary of FWCC, Section of the Americas. The Presiding Clerk's Call to the Annual Session is printed in the March/April issue of Western Friend, and is posted on the npym.org web site. It will also be included in the Registration Information Booklet.

This year the NPYM Youth Committee and Western Friend are jointly holding an “Active and Joyful Spirituality” Playshop, suitable for participants age 11 to 111, on Tuesday afternoon and Wednesday morning prior to the start of the AS.

The NPYM Ministry and Oversight Committee will also hold their usual retreat on Tuesday and Wednesday before the AS.

We are in contact with the Spokane Friends Church (NWYM), and they are offering us space for both of these pre-session groups. They also gave us space for our January ASPC meeting after our tour of the Whitworth Campus. It is really nice to get better acquainted with them. One of their members who is also active with our new Spokane Worship Group, Wade Schwartz, is now on our ASPC as Transportation Coordinator.

This year the deadline for Proposals for Interest Groups is April 15. Be sure to remind people in your meetings to get their proposals to Joyce immediately. In order to get the Interest Groups listed in the Information Booklet, we have decided to open Registration on May 1 instead of the usual April 1.

At the same time the Early Discount period ends on May 15. For this reason, it is important that people begin planning to come to the AS now, and actually register as soon as registration opens. This also means that meetings should distribute the paper registration information and forms to people who want them as soon as the meeting contact people receive them.

It turns out that meeting at Whitworth is more expensive than the Site Committee expected when they chose it. Their meals add to $35 per day, compared with $28 per day last year at Pacific. Then, more recently (after we announced the costs for this year in the brochure) we learned that there will be an 8.7% Washington State Sales Tax on the meals in addition. That adds another $3.05 per day to the meal cost.

People may choose to eat fewer than all three meals a day if they prefer. We need to register in advance for the exact meals you plan to buy. The Information Packet you receive when you arrive will include a reminder of the meals you bought. In an emergency it is possible to buy a meal after you arrive, but Whitworth is not set up for taking cash as you go through the line so doing so is complex. They have a set up where you show you have paid for the meal in order to get into the dining area, and once you are there, it is all you can eat.
The beds in the dorm are comparable in cost to last year, with $28 per person per night for a Double room or $38 per person per night for a Single room. However, these prices include only the bed with a long twin mattress (39x80 inches). If you want a linens package (sheets, pillow and pillow case, a blanket and towel and washcloth), it will cost an additional $10.50 per person per night. That means they supply the set only once, but if you attend the full AS, you will pay for it four times. We feel this is outrageous, but they are adamant about it.

At the same time, they will allow people to bring their own bedding at no additional cost. Furthermore, they allow each person do decide whether or not to bring bedding. We do not need to force that decision on the entire group. We are strongly encouraging people to bring their own. In this regard it will be like going to Quarterly Meeting. At least, for PNQM we bring our own. I am not sure what the WQM and MGOF do.

On the other hand, then are very generous with their costs for children. Every person needs to be in a bed according to the fire marshal, but they are not charging us for bed for children through age 12. They do need to pay the same linen charge or bring their own however. They also are giving a very reduced price for meals for children (no charge through age 5 and $18 per day for age 6-12).

This has allowed us to experiment with our pricing. This year we plan to subsidize the meals for children through Upper Elementary group, and subsidize the Central and Junior Friends enough that they need pay only $200 plus the meal tax. We are doing this in our efforts to be family-frienly.

Whitworth does allow people to live in their own self-contained RV's if they choose. There will be a designated parking area for RV's but there are no hook ups.

Tenting is not allowed on campus, but they pointed out that there are a couple of nice campgrounds close to campus along the Spokane River.

Those are the primary changes we have made this year. The schedule will be roughly the same as in recent years, although we have eliminated the Service Project for this year. The attendance for it has been lagging lately and none of us know the needs in the Spokane area well enough to plan a meaningful one.