North Pacific Yearly Meeting Coordinating Committee Clerk's Report to Annual Session, 2012

I had planned to provide some statistics as a part of the annual evaluation Coordinating Committee clerks are instructed to carry out. They are various numbers such as mid-year appointments, and various attendance figures for Annual Session and Coordinating Committee. However, some numbers are lacking, and there are no clear trends.

In addition, an inner voice that I believe to be divine has been telling to me quite stridently that my truth is not to be found in trying to paint by numbers. Instead I want to focus on the rest of the evaluation questions.

The evaluation document asks the Coordinating Com Clerk to review briefly the substantive work the Yearly Meeting did last year.

Many Friends have been very busy in the past year, giving generously of their time and talents to the Yearly Meeting committees and to many other Friends organizations. And once again plans for this joyous Annual Session have pulled together by heroic last minute effort.

But for me, the question remains - how much of that busyness was substantive? Just what business is spiritually substantive? Perhaps time will tell, or perhaps the answer is different for each of us.

It does seem that we have succeeded in moving the bulk of final decisions to Annual Session. Rather than emphasizing decisions, emphasis at Coordinating Committee for the past year has been on sharing ideas, hopes, frustrations, and suggestions. From my perspective, the single substantive decision made by Coordinating Committee in the past year was to adopt an Archiving procedure and a new job description for the Archivist. (Unfortunately, an Archivist has yet to be found.)

We made another decision at the fall Coordinating Committee Meeting. We accepted, with slight modification, the report of the ad hoc committee seasoning affiliation with Friends for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer Concerns. Later I realized that Steering Committee had specified that this recommendation should be approved in Annual Session. We will come back to this at the end of this report.

How are we doing with giving Annual Session the responsibility of approving appointments?

Until recently, the people found for positions still vacant after the previous AS were approved as soon as either Executive Com. or Coordinating Committee met. Executive Committee is now trying out letting some catch-up appointments wait for approval until the next Coordinating Com. meeting or even the next Annual Session.

Has the new structure increased our willingness or ability to carry on the work of the Yearly Meeting?

It doesn't seem to have gotten any easier to find nominees. Nominating Committee continues to work year-round, trying to catch up with vacant positions. They continue to be frustrated by
receiving very few suggestions and by many refusals. When Nominating Committee asked Coordinating Committee for help, CC united instead on the wish to relieve Nominating Committee of pressure to fill every position on our slate. Seven Standing Committees and all of the representatives to national organizations were left off the list of positions considered important to fill by active recruiting.

Neither Coordinating Com nor Nominating Com have been able to find new members for Nominating Com itself, which has shrunk to three members by attrition and resignations. This is a matter of deep concern to me. I believe the hope had been that if Meetings appoint "Coordinators", these people would be able to reach more effectively into their Meetings to discover or stimulate untapped potential for service. This has not happened.

If we expect "Someone Else", in this case Nominating Committee, to recognize all of the talents in the fellowship of the Yearly Meeting and divine who is being called to serve, do we always answer "Yes" to their call? I ask all of us who have ever answered "no" to a request from the Yearly Meeting Nominating Committee, to recognize the need to support or participate in their work.

Is Annual Session deciding substantive issues? Well, that depends. At last Annual Session, we approved affiliation with Quaker Earthcare Witness. But we also recognized lack of unity by establishing two ad hoc committees for further Yearly Meeting seasoning: one for determining the level and method of support for representatives to the organizations with whom we affiliate, and the other to continue our seasoning of the proposal to affiliate with Friends General Conference.

I see these seasoning committees as an important test of the new structure. Do Meetings and individual Friends feel more involved in the discernment process? Have we found a method of speaking and listening to one another at a significantly deeper spiritual level than in the previous model? Are we able to interact with our ad hoc committees in a way that moves discernment forward? Do the conclusions of these ad hoc com reach reshape the issues in ways that bring us additional Clarity?

The final evaluation step we approved in 2008 is for Coordinating Committee to direct these and similar questions to the entire yearly during the next twelve months. I invite you to speak to any member of Coordinating Committee during this Annual Session if you feel called to help with the evaluation, make suggestions, or have questions.

I have tried to answer the annual evaluation questions helpfully. Of course the deeper question the evaluation policy was written to answer is: Is the Yearly Meeting healthier under the new structure?

I have come to believe that if too few of us are living as attentively as we are called to, no Yearly Meeting structure will succeed in invigorating our fellowship. My question for us is "How do we reach the goal expressed in the NPYM Mission statement: to strengthen and support one another in a common search for divine Truth and Light?"
Please excuse my taking a little extra time to emphasize the common search for divine Truth and Light. My personal experience has been that my vitality comes, not from human encouragement, but from a willingness to focus exclusively on the Divine Light on a regular basis. It comes, not from striving for importance, but in humbly seeking to be a vessel of divine love.

For over 60 years, I was a "good Quaker." I attended Meeting frequently, read Quaker literature sporadically, discussed social action, led worship-sharing groups, took turns clerking Junior Friends and my Meeting. But my spiritual life lacked authenticity and clear direction; I wasn't being called to say "Yes".

Then, about five years ago, I deliberately set aside a brief session each morning of being fully attentive to the Divine. Very soon I added the brief reading of spiritually nurturing literature to that morning time. Gradually, the time I am able to remain consciously in the Present has spread throughout the day. It has developed over these years that my thinking and deciding about everything has come to feel more Centered. When I am led to act, I am likely to find myself acting with more clarity, more love, and more joy.

I invite all of you who have not already done so to join me on an intentional daily spiritual journey of your own, and God's, making.

Now, we come to the business that belongs to you rather than CC; accepting the report of the FLGBTQC affiliation committee.

The report, in the form accepted by Coordinating Committee, is among the papers posted on the web along with this and other reports. Because FLGBTQC is not structured with a Board of Yearly Meeting Representatives, as other national organizations are, the report recommends continuing to call the liaisons to FLGBTQC "Correspondents" instead of representatives. Further recommendations are that the job description encourage but not require attendance at FLGBTQC events, and that the positions not include an allowance for travel to national events. Nevertheless, the report suggests that the appointee continue to be included in the activities of the combined Yearly Meeting Representatives to National Organizations.

Submitted by

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NPYM Coordinating Committee