2013:20 ad hoc Committee on Relationship of NPYM to Monthly Meetings

Minute of Exercise (questions, comments and concerns from the floor of the plenary)

This committee will report at next Annual Session? (yes)

What about connections between the Yearly Meeting and the Annual session (a number of nods)

How to include new Friends who don't know what the Yearly Meeting or Quarterly Meetings are about?

What will be logistics of meeting for a group this large?

Three Committees seem to be chasing the same rabbit: structure committee, communication committee and now this committee. How to coordinate their activities among Friends.

Concern about size of Committee. Seven or eight seems to be the limit on a conference call, especially if they don't know one another. Groups mentioned as being represented should be engaged in the process but should they all be on the Committee?

Our new Meeting relied heavily on the Quarterly for support, now that is gone. Would it be possible to set up a resource center to provide support when needed?

This Committee could work from demographic data to pinpoint where the problems are, rather than approaching it as though the problem of lack of interest is universal. Are we so anxious about dwindling attendance that we are not identifying where the lack of interest lies and working on how to address it there?

If we are doing significant spiritual work here, and we make it feasible to come, people will come. (murmurs of agreement)
I want more of my peers (other 30 and 40 year olds with kids, families with young kids) to come to Annual Session. These gatherings have been important to my own development and identity as a Friend. It seems that this is a small charge, now, for this Committee and I am concerned that the emphasis and encouraging of young families will be lost (speaks my mind from several)

Smaller and distant meetings experience the Yearly Meeting as a source of requests for discernment on matters about which we have little background or engagement

Big meetings, too.

Quaker faith and practice is based around the monthly meeting. I hope we can remember that the local gatherings of Friends are the center of our spiritual lives, and that the Yearly Meeting should support that local life and not supplant it. The goal is not to get more people to the Annual Session but to nurture the local life of the Spirit

Clerk pointed out the role of Quarterly Meetings in administrative support of local gatherings of Friends.

Need to communicate the reality that the Annual Session is not the same thing as the Yearly Meeting. The Annual Session is a gathering of some members of the community that we call the Yearly Meeting.

I am not clear that approving this Committee at this moment to get to the problem that we have been struggling with throughout various discussions this year.

Clerk: not sure how to proceed. The Committee has a charge and I hear the lack of clarity about what it is needed. Approve the minutes of exercise and have Friend who are concerned come back tomorrow to present a minute of decision?

Can we hear the charge again?

Charge was read out.
Clear to me that the problem with the charge is that it needs things subtracted, not added. In the next year look at affordability and do some work with related Committees to identify things it can do that will not overlap with those Committees charge.

An ad hoc Committee should have a single charge that it can work on, complete, and then lay down.

On the nominating slate this Committee is called the Family Affordability Committee.

We are down in the trees and not seeing the forest—we have three questions that are sitting: what is the Yearly Meeting for, what are we doing, and how are we doing it. It doesn't hurt to have many minds on a committee. Some consolidation is in order. We could function on these questions as a committee of the whole. Fourth question, how will we be able to do it. Let’s not get too wrapped up in building the yearly meeting. We have to settle what we are for.

We've had a discussion of the purpose of the yearly meeting over the last half hour and for several days, and I have not heard the word spirit once. No one has said that the purpose of the yearly meeting is to discern the will of the Spirit. Maybe the trouble is that we are chasing rabbits when we should be chasing God. Communications Committee and bringing young families are a lovely ideas if we have a message. We don't make the message, we hear the message.

Two things are niggling at my mind. One is what kinds of gatherings help us get in touch with the Spirit?

A big gathering only every other year? I would like to write a charge that gives the Committee permission to consider such ideas. The other issue is how we live out our lives in community and create structures where we understand that things are going on that we don't know about.

Trying to feel the sense of the meeting—there is something very big happening here. If we could turn this plenary into a meeting for
worship it might emerge. Is the rest of business as important as what is moving among us.

The business that has been prepared is being crowded out in discussion not concise. This kind of frustration may be one of the reasons we have problems with people waning to come.

Never attended while a Friend in California. Only when I came here that I understood the value of attending quarterlies and annual session. Small meeting between 2 and 6. Quarterly and Annual Sessions connect us to the larger Quaker world. I value the connection with Friends who pass through. If Annual Session leadership can encourage Friends from different meetings to visit with one another that is good. Putting the visitation on a committee or structure is a barrier to general visitation.

The Minute of Exercise was approved as complete and faithful to the sense of the questions, comments and concerns from the plenary floor.