

## **Ministry and Oversight Report to Yearly Meeting July, 2009**

It has been an amazing year for the Ministry and Oversight Committee – primarily due to the work of three hard working subcommittees, and other subcommittees as well. Altogether, in addition to the 8 members of the committee (we had one vacancy after Leonard Joy moved back to Britain) 23 other Friends served in various capacities. Throughout the week you have seen the fruits of this work, whether from the Youth Coordinator subcommittee, or Ministry and Leadings, the Future of the Yearly Meeting subcommittee, Electronic subcommittee and Mexico City. We now have a comprehensive document about answering leadings and the procedures that help support such work, as well as recommendations for moving forward on taking the care of the ministries of Julie Harlow and Rachel Fretz'. And we have concrete proposals for both deepening youth work and possible new directions for the structure of the yearly meeting. Regardless of whether Friends unite with the specifics of any of these proposals, you have been well served in the preparation and discernment process.

The Electronic Subcommittee will be evaluating the use of conference calls in place of face-to-face meetings, and will be working with the Treasurer on the best systems to use. They are looking for a new web coordinator. Please contact Don Bean if you are interested.

Mexico City subcommittee has worked with Discipline Committee to help Mexico City Monthly Meeting publish a pamphlet of Advices, Queries and Testimonies in Spanish. The Meeting continues to search for a seasoned Friend to serve as Resident Friend in Mexico City.

As usual, members of M&O read all the State of the Meeting reports from Monthly Meetings – looking for particular trends, highlights, concerns that should be brought forward. A number of Meetings have continued to explore themes that began with the Year of Discernment – addressing needs to restructure committees, develop new nominations processes, and grow new leadership. A large number of Meetings are actively involved in interfaith bodies in their local areas, sometimes around important issues of the day, and sometimes as an attempt to live our testimony on equality and inclusiveness. Several Meetings have engaged in creative outreach to let their Lights shine in the broader community. A few have experienced a steady stream of new members. Often there is a seamless continuity between work within the Meeting and work on local and global needs.

We have been blessed to have Vanessa Julye join us again this year, with her elder Janice Dominik, and to celebrate the publication of Fit for Freedom, Not for Friendship. Vanessa has provided us with a close link to Friends General Conference and it is fitting that we have heard from a number of Meetings and committees that it is time to examine our relationship to FGC.

The issue of trust among Friends, and how we treat each other when we disagree has been a carry over from last year, and one which our worship sharing groups have been grappling with. Still, new wounds keep occurring and Friends who are working hard to serve the yearly meeting have felt unappreciated and even abused. Indeed, Walker Creek staff have found our demands excessive, and our attitudes less than friendly at times.

As we consider the future of the Yearly Meeting, we cannot ignore the plummeting economic times, the drop in attendance, and the increase in needs for financial assistance to attend. Can we continue to meet yearly, or do we need to explore other options? Can we merge our blossoming awareness of the fragility of the earth and our footprints upon it, with some kind of streamlining, or downsizing? Can we find ways to live our faith in simplicity by opting out of the consumer culture and the fossil fuel culture and celebrating values more in keeping with our faith? Maybe these sounds more like Unity with Nature concerns, but we can no longer compartmentalize how we live our lives and how we conduct our business from broader spiritual and ministerial considerations.

The Futures subcommittee is actively exploring options for a new role for Representative Committee that would allow us to move some of our business to that venue, freeing up more time at the annual sessions for other kinds of activities. They have been considering everything from not meeting every year, to lengthening the time we do meet, but dividing it between business and more social/educational experiences. The subcommittee is working on a proposal which will be circulated when ready. There is a prospect for a visit from Friends from North Pacific Yearly Meeting in 2010, to consult with them on structural differences in how they conduct their sessions.

Another set of issues that Futures has been attending to involves the relationship between the Yearly Meeting and the Monthly Meetings. Communication back and forth continues to be a problem. Even documents posted on the website may or may not be read. Letters sent to clerks and representatives may or may not land in the right mail boxes. E-mails become overwhelming. Our open meeting gave us new ideas for working on these relationships, but ultimately we need to reach greater clarity on the purpose of the yearly meeting if it is to serve Friends well.

Laura Magnani, Clerk