

Peace and Social Concerns Committee
Intermountain Yearly Meeting of Friends
Report to the Annual Gathering of IMYM, June 2019
Jamie Newton, Clerk, Peace and Social Concerns Committee

Throughout Intermountain Yearly Meeting, in many forms of witness and service, Friends are expressing values and testimonies that have been articulated and reaffirmed by generations of seekers. As we address the urgent challenges of our time, the deep wisdom of Quakerism reveals its contemporary relevance and sustains us. Peace and Social Concerns Committee members are grateful for gifts of insights, renewed resiliency, and spiritual refreshment that flow consistently from the mutual support and strengthened bonds of community we experience together.

**Plenary session on how Friends' organizations address the theme of the 2019 annual gathering:
*Faith, Fear, and Our Future***

The Peace and Social Concerns Committee, the Delegates Committee, and the Program Working Group have collaborated to plan a 90-minute plenary session scheduled for Thursday evening at the 2019 annual gathering, with unique and innovative formatting and procedures designed to illuminate the work of the major Friends' organizations with which IMYM is affiliated – AFSC, FCNL, FGC, FPT, FWCC, QEW (affiliation under discernment) –in relation to the 2019 theme: *Faith, Fear, and Our Future*. The program that evolved as planning meetings were held over a period of months features brief presentations by IMYM delegates and liaisons to the organizations followed by small group sharing. The session will emphasize issues with rising engagement among IMYM Friends, including climate change, eco-justice, race relations, and the immigration justice crisis centered around the U.S. border with Mexico (and, therefore, in our own communities).

Resource Center at the June 2019 annual gathering

At the June 2019 annual gathering of IMYM the Committee will coordinate the Peace and Social Concerns Resource Center, as we have since 2014, hosting displays and encouraging dialogue. *Guidelines* for use of the Resource Center have been circulated, and will be available at the annual gathering.

***How do our lives speak now?* Concerns, projects, and forms of witness currently among IMYM Friends**

IMYM's Presiding Clerk, Molly Wingate, invited the Committee to gather concise summaries of our monthly meetings' current experiences with discernment and action on issues of peace and social concerns. Molly distilled the results of our outreach for circulation in her Clerk's newsletter, sent to more than 200 recipients within IMYM, a creative approach to advance the Committee's mission, foster wider awareness of leadings now rising among Friends, and nourish emergence of communities of concern and action within IMYM. Themes that were prominent in summaries from monthly meetings are evident in the present report as well.

Responses to IMYM action minutes, and discernment on current concerns

The Peace and Social Concerns Committee continues to seek information on how Friends have responded to statements of position and commitments to action in minutes that IMYM has approved on peace and social concerns, encouraging actions consistent with our words as way opens. We invite Friends to share their discernment and actions in response to minutes approved by IMYM in recent years, including immigration justice and human rights, nuclear disarmament, support for women's health services provided by Planned Parenthood, support for the rights of indigenous peoples, opposition to gun violence, opposition to torture, and more. To review action minutes and resources for discernment, Friends may visit <http://imym.org/peace-service-committee/>.

Friendly responses to huddled masses yearning to breathe free: Immigration justice and border issues

As the 2019 annual gathering comes together, IMYM Friends host and support sanctuary for immigrants at risk of arrest and deportation, assist immigrants in need through direct services and by providing financial and other resources, advocate just immigration policies, and unite with kindred spirits from other faith communities and many walks of life to offer compassionate responses to the rapidly growing needs of refugees and asylum seekers in our region. The expanding humanitarian crisis at the U.S. border with Mexico strongly impacts communities within IMYM. Friends minister through word and deed, with those at a distance sending substantial donations of goods and money to Friends near the border to be used according to local priorities. Border area Friends have hosted travelers who come from afar to serve in person. Friends have joined efforts to welcome and assist victims of the increasingly frequent practice by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) officers of transporting and dumping destitute migrants – deprived even of belts, shoelaces, diapers, and blankets they have carried – to wander hungry and confused on the streets of towns where they have never been before.

IMYM Friends shared in a Quaker presence with participants from many parts of the country at the three Border Convergences (*Encuentros*) in Nogales sponsored by the School of Americas Watch in November of 2016, 2017, and 2018 to call for an end to military oppression, economic exploitation, and US policies antithetical to democracy and social justice throughout the Americas.

The Peace and Social Concerns Committee is alert to opportunities to facilitate information sharing and cooperation among Friends on these issues.

Climate change – a draft minute affirms Friends’ awareness and leadings to act

Climate change is accelerating globally, driven by human activities that threaten the capacity of the biosphere to sustain humans and other species, weakening entire ecosystems with consequent loss of species, and most severely impacting human groups that are already most disadvantaged and marginalized. At least six of the seventeen monthly meetings of IMYM have minuted leadings to address climate change. The Peace and Social Concerns Committee will bring to the 2019 annual gathering of IMYM a minute approved by Tempe Monthly Meeting and seasoned by our Committee that integrates the points of unity we found in the minutes previously approved in IMYM monthly meetings, as well as minutes from Friends elsewhere in the United States. This draft action minute carries a sense of urgency that reflects the direct relevance of global climate change to the theme of the 2019 annual gathering, especially as it has been extended by Young Friends of IMYM: *Faith, Fear, and Hope for Our Future*.

Grounded in awareness of our responsibilities for stewardship of this fragile planet, as expressed in the wisdom of indigenous peoples and Quaker statements dating back to the writings of William Penn and other early Friends, the draft minute begins with this preface:

We have gathered for a week to consider “Faith, Fear, and Our Future,” acknowledging that we are now living during a time of climate crisis. We come to this moment grounded in the testimonies of the Religious Society of Friends. The testimonies of community, equality, stewardship, and integrity call us forward in our work. We recognize that peace is increasingly linked to climate justice, both globally and locally.

Racism and White Privilege – awareness and action for authentic inclusiveness

The IMYM Representatives Committee, meeting in Tempe, AZ, Feb. 2-3, 2018, minuted a charge to the Peace and Social Concerns Committee to encourage further seasoning on the concern for racism among us:

Exclusion based on the perception of race (a biological fiction, but a social reality) is a widespread injustice that continues to trouble IMYM Friends. Representatives charge the Peace & Service Committee to encourage monthly meetings and worship groups to continue to season the concern for racism among us and revisit the query with a report back to Representatives Committee in a year or two.

Friends in several monthly meetings are developing resources for exploring manifestations of racism among Friends at all levels, from interpersonal dynamics to institutional practices. Such complex, deeply rooted, and often transparent (or at least unacknowledged) processes will not be quickly understood and altered, but efforts now under way will be represented in experiences offered at the 2019 annual gathering.

Statement of purpose and description of the *Peace and Social Concerns Committee*, revised in 2018

In consultation with the Peace and Social Concerns Committee, the Procedures Committee approved updates to our Committee's description, notably in the purpose and membership sections (below). The complete revised description can be found on the website, imym.org.

Purpose: The primary purpose of this committee is to facilitate communication and networking among monthly meetings, worship groups, and other Friends regarding peace and service concerns. As opportunities arise, the Committee will help coordinate actions among meetings. The Committee may be asked by IMYM business meeting to sift and season concerns relevant to peace and service opportunities that may arise in sessions or in Representatives Committee, and report back. The Committee does not oversee any peace and service projects but only encourages and supports local Friends in their leadings and projects.

Membership: Members represent a variety of concerns and are geographically diverse. Three-year terms for members are best when overlapping, with none serving more than two consecutive terms. The Committee is constituted as follows:

- Clerk of Peace and Service Committee (appointed by Nominating Committee and approved at IMYM business sessions.)
- Four members or more nominated and approved by IMYM, with the assistance of regional meetings.
- Co-opted members: The Committee may ask individuals with particular expertise to advise the Committee on actions and proposals. These Friends may serve on special task groups, ad hoc sub-committees, and as regular members of the Committee.

Excerpted from the description approved by the IMYM Procedures Committee, 1/24/2018

Communication and networking – using Zoom, and new resources on imym.org

The Peace and Social Concerns Committee has instituted Google Groups forums on the IMYM website, imym.org, as resources for communication on shared concerns and projects. The first four are:

- Friends for Right Relationship with Native Peoples (first, learn more about Indigenous Peoples Concerns Committee on Boulder MM’s website)
- IMYM P&SC Border Concerns
- IMYM P&SC Climate Concerns
- IMYM Testimonies in Action (TIA)

Links to the Google Groups forums are found by visiting: <http://imym.org/areas-of-concern-googlegroups/>. A special account is not needed in order to register as a participant in these forums. We ask Friends to bring these resources to the attentions of their monthly meetings and worship groups.

The Committee continues to facilitate networking and collaboration among Friends using more traditional forms of communication as well – discernment and action within monthly meetings and worship groups, as our basic units of community; paper mail, email and other forms of e-communication; telephone conversations; meetings using conference calls, during the past year with both audio and video conferencing using the *Zoom* conferencing system provided cost-free for Friendly purposes as a service of **Western Friend**. Friends who are willing to serve as contacts, with a liaison role between their meeting and the Peace and Social Concerns Committee, are urged to communicate with their regional representative to the Committee (see contact information below).

Peace and Social Concerns Committee members, with contact information

Arizona Half-Yearly Meeting

Gretchen Reinhardt (Tempe): cooperativebydesign@q.com; Tel: 480-968-4056

Tom Martin (Flagstaff): fireflytom@mindspring.com; Tel: 928 862 2873

Colorado Regional Meeting

Brent Ridley (Mountain View): brent.ridley1@gmail.com; Tel: 720-767-7010

Claire Sheridan (formerly of Colorado Springs, Claire moved to Taos, NM, and no longer represents CRM but remains active with the Committee) : cs624pearl@gmail.com; Tel: 303-448-1523

New Mexico Regional Meeting

Vickie Aldrich (Las Cruces): mathstar@zianet.com; Tel: 575-541-9093

Utah Friends Fellowship

Scott Cowan (Salt Lake City): wpi958@msn.com; Tel: 801-935-4419

Clerk, Peace and Social Concerns Committee, IMYM

Jamie Newton (Gila): jnewton@sfsu.edu; Tel: 650-400-2205

PLEASE NOTE: Jamie Newton and Gretchen Reinhardt will conclude their terms of service on the IMYM Peace and Social Concerns Committee at the rise of the 2019 annual gathering. Scott Cowan will continue to represent Utah Friends until a Friend is appointed to replace him. All three of these Friends have served two three-year terms. David Henkel (Santa Fe) is the incoming Clerk of the Peace and Social Concerns Committee.
