

Ministry and Advancement Committee Report to Annual Session 2011

We'd like to start with a few late-breaking news bulletins:

- Ministry and Advancement Committee has been re-imagining the way we do our work. We've come to unity on a Statement of Vision, which is on the ILYM website (<http://www.ilym.org/2011AnnualSessions>), and in the Advance Documents. We invite you to look it over! Basically, the Statement of Vision *is* our report.
- Committee members will be available after supper in the dining tent, each evening during annual session, in order to answer questions and hear your comments and suggestions in response to our Statement of Vision.
- We helped some meetings create websites last year, but the ways in which people – especially young people – communicate continue to evolve, and we need to keep abreast of new technologies if we hope to serve them. One meeting has asked for help connecting with younger people through Facebook and Twitter. Greg Woods has volunteered to help, but unfortunately is unable to attend annual session. However, he will consult with Friends via phone – he says he has free anytime minutes, and he suggests talking you through the process of getting online via Facebook. His email is gregwoodsquaker@gmail.com. Contact him via email to set up a phone time.

Ministry and Advancement Committee's turning point, as we were re-imagining our work, came during our fall retreat. We'd been sharing our sense of what the yearly meeting's spiritual state was, and then together faced the query, "What can Ministry and Advancement Committee do to strengthen the yearly meeting spiritually?" Out of the silence one Friend said, "Pray." Another said, "Pray til the power of the Lord comes down." The silence was electric, and then the ideas began to flow.

We had been energized already by Paul Buckley's vision of bringing the FWCC "Salt and Light" presenters to various meetings in Illinois during the fall. Paul had shown us his tremendous gifts for coordination and persistence (How many individual phone calls and emails did it take, Paul, to herd all those Quaker cats in all those different meetings?) Now Paul was saying to us, "Next time we put forth all that effort, it should be for something of our own." Out of this experience was born the initiative we called Days of Spiritual Sustenance – our effort to nurture our nurturers by reaching out to Friends on a more regional basis, so as to give our spiritual nurturers an opportunity to begin to know the nurturers in nearby meetings. We offered free lunch, travel reimbursement, and free childcare; 36 Friends from 9 meetings attended the gatherings, and at least two Friends awoke to the realization that they did, indeed, have a call to the ministry among Friends. What a gift these dear Friends will be to all of us in future years! Paul has always had a passion for building up the Society of Friends, but Paul and M & A set each other on fire during this last year.

We are mutually sorry that Paul will be unable to help us carry our vision forward to the next step; but we remind ourselves of something Neil Mesner said a year ago in February. He was fixing a doorknob on this meetinghouse when it came to him that anything worth doing takes more than a lifetime. It is not our job to finish the work to which God has called us, but to leave it to God, and to others, when we are called to other work. M & A has begun the process of recruiting a new Field Secretary. We invite Friends to consider whether you may have a leading to become our next Field Secretary. Does something in you say, "I'd like to have Paul's job"? Joan Pine and Beth Burbank will welcome opportunities to talk with you and answer questions about becoming Field Secretary for Illinois Yearly Meeting. Maybe the time when you can be Field Secretary is a few years away, but it is not too soon to begin to learn about the work. Paul would also welcome the opportunity to talk with you – as would our other former Field Secretaries, Roxy Jacobs and Maurine Pyle.

The individual journey to spiritual maturity is always a trail and never a campsite, and the same is true for Ministry and Advancement Committee, and for the yearly meeting as a whole. We invite you to join us in this journey. We'll have to scramble through the underbrush now and again, and probably lose sight of the trail sometimes as well, but when we decide to look for the path again, it'll always be right at our feet. Come along -- we will have great adventures – together.