

Report from Ministry and Advancement Committee to ILYM Annual Session, June 2012

M&A committee has number of accomplishments to report, and some challenges to share with Friends. Accomplishments include:

- Selection and orientation of our new Field Secretary, Judy Wolicki, who was approved by Continuing Committee in November. Judy immediately began getting acquainted and starting to build ongoing relationships with our various meetings. Judy's gifts in pastoral care are amazing to witness, amazing to receive. She hears what you haven't said and invites you to talk about it. She's been doing double duty this year, working as our Field Secretary while also finishing a very intensive internship in pastoral care. We look forward to enjoying lots more of Judy's spiritual gifts once the internship is completed in August. The Field Secretary's report in the Advance Documents provides her own perspective on her work.
- A Fall retreat at Clear Creek House for M&A members with Brent Bill, a Quaker author and pastor who directs "Center for Congregations" in Indiana. Brent focused our attention on how meetings can be more welcoming to visitors and newcomers. As an example, he asked us to share what helps us to feel comfortable when visiting an unfamiliar place. The list was published in the winter issue of *Among Friends*.
- Approval of a travel policy for adjunct visitors as well as for M&A members. It includes informing M&A in advance of a visit and reporting briefly via email afterwards.
- Appointment of 2 adjunct members (David Finke and Maurine Pyle) to visit some of our geographically dispersed meetings: St. Louis, Big Muddy Worship Group, Columbia, Rolla, Urbana-Champaign, and Oshkosh. In addition, ILYM Clerk Janice Domanik visited Oshkosh on our behalf, and Cherie DuPuis and Mike Ruberton volunteered to visit Rolla with David Finke. Our heartfelt thanks go to all these traveling ministers.
- Appointment of a committee-at-large (Beth Schobernd, Mariellen Gilpin, Christina Schulz, and Steve Tamari) to provide spiritual support and nurture for a new worship group in Macomb. (While Spoon River Friends are the parent meeting, they lack the energy for this work.) Macomb is a very organized worship group that is making admirable efforts at outreach. Beth and Judy Wolicki plan to offer them a version of Quakerism 101.
- Publication and distribution of Janet Means Underhill's *Book of Hope and Comfort*. Janet created both the text and the drawings that grace several pages. Paul Buckley did the beautiful layout, and David Finke saw it through the printing process. Carolyn Treadway reviewed it for *Western Friend*, *Friends Journal*, *Quaker Life*, and *The Friend*. We thank these Friends for sharing their gifts with us so generously. Copies of Janet's book were distributed first at Spring Continuing Committee as a gift from M&A, and additional copies were sent to monthly meetings. The remaining copies from that first printing are available at the Bookstore, while they last. Be sure to ask Janet to autograph your copy. Share it widely, Friends! Our thanks to Finance Committee for already approving a second printing, which M&A had not anticipated would be needed before the new fiscal year. Copies from this second printing will be offered at \$1.50 each to cover production costs.
- A professional-quality workshop on conflict resolution in meetings, presented March 24 by Fernando and Priscila Freire. Bridget and Chip Rorem kindly hosted this event in their living room in Kankakee, enabling us to offer it without charge. We were limited to 15 Friends and had to turn away almost as many. (A word to the wise: Most of the lucky ones signed up the

same day the email arrived.) Participants were enthusiastic and urged that a workshop on conflict resolution be offered every year. We are grateful to Fernando and Priscila for sharing their knowledge and wisdom, and to Bridget and Chip for their gracious hosting, which included a delicious lunch for all.

Fernando recommended two excellent resources: the FGC booklet, *The Wounded Meeting*, which our own Janet Means Underhill helped write; and *Never Call Them Jerks: Healthy Responses to Difficult Behavior*, which discusses how churches can deal with difficult people. Marcia Nelson has several copies of each of these resources at the Bookstore, and we have reviews available for more information.

- Outreach work furthered by individual members of M&A.
 - Wil Brant traveled to Elkhart, Indiana, for the inaugural meeting of a potential worship group sponsored by South Bend Friends.
 - Joan Pine served on the core committee for Evanston Friends' Quaker Quest series, the first ever conducted in our yearly meeting region. Meetings are encouraged to explore this option for outreach by contacting the program coordinator for Friends General Conference's Advancement and Outreach Committee, Elaine Crauderueff (elainec@fgcquaker.org). She can discuss your situation and explain what resources, including financial assistance, are available. Even where Quaker Quest seems too great an undertaking, meetings and worship groups can grow stronger when members share their spiritual journeys in a similar way.
 - Mariellen Gilpin helped edit an issue of *What Canst Thou Say?* (for Quakers who have mystical experiences) on the topic of Shame. Friends have called this issue "daring and powerful." They have shared it with therapists and advocated making it available in local practices. It appears on the WCTS web site, and a few print copies are available today.
- Minute: Illinois Yearly Meeting's Ministry and Advancement Committee continues to endorse Carolyn Treadway as pastoral counselor and Beth Burbank as pastoral counselor and pastoral educator. This endorsement is ongoing.

Now, here are the challenges that M&A members see before us:

- We are aware of many needs among ILYM meetings: Friends who have difficulty communicating Quaker values and practices to newcomers; small struggling meetings that need more spiritual messages in worship and more spiritual seeking together; meetings in conflict; meetings whose elders are aging and ill; and those who are dealing with grief and loss.
- In this past year, M&A lost a third of its committee. Beth Burbank, Jeannie Marvin, and Dave Moorman all resigned due to various personal challenges that have been consuming their energy. We miss these dear Friends, whose ideas and wisdom all have helped to advance our work, and we thank them for their many years of devoted service to ILYM.
- These losses have underscored the fact that serving on M&A involves a clear commitment of time and energy. Our committee meets twice a year as well as during annual session. In addition to responsible roles in our home meetings, we are charged with ministering to other meetings and worship groups. The proven best way to minister to any meeting is to build a relationship with it. Relationships grow out of shared experiences over time, so we ask each M&A member to travel to one or two other meetings a few times a year. This ministry is rewarding; it's both a privilege and a joy. However, even with adjunct visitors and an energetic field secretary, there are too few

- of us to minister effectively to 20 meetings and worship groups.
- We fell short of presenting the number of regional workshops anticipated in last year's Vision Statement, despite the enthusiasm of our clerk, Mariellen Gilpin. She has done monumental work: visiting more meetings than any of us, maintaining contact with our adjunct visitors, serving on the field secretary's support committee, communicating frequently by email and conference calls, and either presiding or recording minutes at each M&A meeting. This pace finally caught up with her, and she found it necessary to step aside as clerk in early May. She now is concentrating on preparing for a workshop that she and Roxy plan to offer in several downstate locations in the coming year: "Forgiving Our Intimate Wounds." We are deeply grateful for all the time and energy Mariellen has contributed, and we are glad that she plans to complete her term. Joan Pine is serving as interim clerk of M&A through annual session.
 - M&A has begun to question whether its traditional structure is still best suited to address effectively the challenges we have described. Are there better ways to offer ministry that will nourish us as well as the yearly meeting? What more can we do to encourage both spiritual deepening and outreach? Should M&A members do less visitation and offer more regional workshops? Should we separate the two functions into subcommittees (or even separate committees) so that members can concentrate on one or the other? How well is the model of adjunct visitation working? How can we get better geographic representation on M&A? Would more use of electronic tools conserve time and resources or slide us into secular modes of decision making? Where is the Divine leading us?

As Ministry and Advancement Committee continues to seek God's guidance, please include these challenges in your prayers. And if your prayers inspire you to offer any suggestions, please share them with any member of M&A.