

*Ministry and Advancement Committee Report to Continuing Committee
October 23, 2010*

Ministry and Advancement Committee's Fall Retreat is scheduled for November 12-13. We have agreed in principle via email, however, to an idea proposed by our three resident and extant field secretaries, Roxy Jacobs, Maurine Pyle, and Paul Buckley. They recommended that Ministry and Advancement hold annual Days of Spiritual Sustenance on a regional basis. These events are intended specifically for those dear Friends that our monthly meetings and worship groups rely on when they create committees for clearness or care, and Ministry and Oversight (or Counsel) committees; also, those Friends that monthly meetings feel especially nourished by spiritually when they speak in worship. We have agreed via email to invite meetings to choose these individuals to attend the Days of Spiritual Sustenance. Paul Buckley has taken the lead in planning a program and is working with various meetings now to act as hosts for these regional gatherings.

Ministry and Advancement committee has agreed to provide travel reimbursement, a simple noon meal, and childcare, so that Friends can readily come, regardless of the state of their pocketbooks or their family responsibilities. When we gather at our Fall Retreat, we will discern face-to-face in more detail. We are working toward presenting these regional gatherings in early 2011. Our purposes in creating these Days of Spiritual Sustenance are several.

- We want to nurture our nurturers, because they give us so much. They are the lifeblood of our meetings, and we want them to have a chance to catch their breath as well as "be there" for others.
- We want them to meet and get to know other nurturers in nearby meetings, so they can call upon each other for help and advice.
- We want them to experience one another's gifts, so that if your meeting is dealing with a conflict, someone will know a nearby Friend experienced in conflict resolution – for example.

We have other reasons as well, not simply to strengthen our monthly meetings, but also to build up the life of the yearly meeting.

- The yearly meeting and its leadership is aging. Look around you today: what is the average age in this room? We need to reach out and attract new Friends and younger Friends to our annual gatherings. How do we begin to do that? It's going to take all of us, putting our creativity to work on this problem, to bring in new faces and new ideas and energy. Otherwise, one of us in this room is likely to be the person who locks the yearly meetinghouse door forever – the one who gets to watch it be torn down and replaced with another strip mall.
- We've had a tendency to nominate the same Friends to yearly meeting committees over and over. This means we aren't training new leadership,

and it also means we aren't bringing in fresh faces and fresh ideas and energies to do the work—to re-imagine the work. As a consequence, when new people do attend an annual session, they look around and say, "I'm not wanted here." And leave.

- Look at why we've nominated the same Friends over and over from your own point of view. Suppose, for instance, that you were looking for a husband or wife. Someone said to you, "There's this really wonderful Friend in my meeting who is just the person you ought to marry." You've never met this person, let alone had coffee with them, or hung out on the porch on a hot afternoon, never watched them interact with other Friends. You would be really reluctant to marry them sight unseen, right? That's the way Nominating Committees feel: "Sure, this person in your meeting may be a fine person, *but we don't know him*, and we don't want to give him significant responsibility."
- Think of it also from the point of view of the person in your meeting who's very gifted, but has never come to yearly meeting. What if yearly meeting Nominating committee did ask him or her to be on a committee? What's that Friend likely to say? We need to invite him to dance with us, at least, before asking him to take out the garbage!
- Thus, Ministry and Advancement Committee is challenging itself to attract Friends with spiritual gifts to come to yearly meeting Ministry and Advancement-sponsored regional events. We want to get to know them, and let them get to know us, and through us, decide to become more and more involved in the yearly meeting. We want to reach out to the nurturers in our monthly meetings. If they feel nourished spiritually by one of these regional events, they will be more likely to make the effort to try other yearly meeting events – and they will be more likely to invite others in their meeting to come too. In this way, we hope to increase the pool of Friends with spiritual gifts for Nominating Committees of the future to draw from.

We challenge other yearly meeting committees to think along these lines, as well. What sort of outreach might you undertake to find and attract Friends with the appropriate gifts to get involved with your work? Think of yourselves as matchmakers – isn't the Yiddish word for a matchmaker a *yenta*? Think of yourselves as yentas for building up the life and the future of the yearly meeting. Can your committee, too, consider taking a show on the road to the monthly meetings, or inviting likeminded Friends to come to an event near them which you sponsor? None of us wants to see the yearly meeting campus become a McDonald's. What can your committee do to keep the yearly meeting vital?