

NomComm 2016 Annual Session Report

Nominating Committee of 2015-16 has been working to fill positions of responsibility in our NPYM region for Annual Session and for the basic functions of North Pacific Yearly Meeting.

It is a service that tests our Quaker process and resilience to pursue the task we are given. It certainly has challenged past nominating committees in seeking folks to serve in 2 yr and up to 4 yr + terms in various positions of service. In having reviewed past concerns of NC (Nominating Committee) and being present and aware of the concerns about the committee's charge, we believe there is a systemic concern in our region that needs to be brought forward once again.

Over the last 5-10 years the attendance to Annual Session has fluctuated with totals of participants from 230-325 approximately and adult counts from 165 -220. This varies due to location, costs and dates. Yet the responsibilities of our organization seem to have increased. We have added positions, some paid, others volunteer and all our committees still require 4-6 people on them. We have added the requirement that these committees represent all areas of our region instead of allowing those on the committee to communicate to all regions of the committee's progress. We have 96-98 positions that we are tasked to fill and process is a revolving door – once one section of a committee is filled another needs 2-3 more people found to serve (due to term limit with over-lapping service). Consider the average of adult count yearly is about 192 folks and the Nominating Committee is charged to ask over half of those people to serve in some way to NPYM. To add to this, many of those who are serving now are aging out and the ability to serve becomes more taxing and less spiritual, less enjoyable. We are all struggling to find younger participants in NPYM service. Many do serve. Yet, those who are younger and have served, in some cases, have been over burdened with the tasks required and little to no mentorship.

Looking at the status of several our Monthly Meetings there seems to be similar difficulties. Many Meetings have lost folks to death and numbers have decreased for variety of reasons. Meetings struggle to fill their own leadership positions, yet we continue to ask them to serve in our regional organization as well.

Our committee would like to propose some downsizing of committees and positions to fit the current status of our NPYM Region.

We suggest the numbers of each committee be reduced even by one, but if possible, more. Perhaps in some, the terms could be reduced so folks may be more willing to serve 1 to 2 years instead of 3-4. It is very difficult to find people that will serve the longer terms. Truly if we are looking for people who are younger we need to consider their personal lives and ability to serve, or lack there of, to commit to a 4yr term. It seems those who are retired can fill these positions with greater attention then one who is working, raising a family, going to school, etc. We would like to introduce a mentorship program where those who have served over the years and wish to step back a bit could lend their knowledge and support to those coming in new to service. This enhances the transition for new people into service and makes the service feel less ominous.

Some Standing committees have been working with fewer then the number required by job description. This is most helpful, even though it has occurred by default. We are asking that other committees do the same. Many of the committees require 6 and it is often difficult to meet this as well as getting one person from each region. We suggest those present on the committee make sure to communicate information to parts of the region that are not represented on the committee.

Though to the most part we have succeeded in filling many positions, we ask that flexibility be considered. Reps to Orgs Committees could be reduced as well. There are other alternatives to downsizing our volunteer service load. Some committees have not had people showing interest to serve at present. We have chosen to leave the committee unfilled until interest rises again.

These changes possibly puts greater expectancy on the people of the committees and perhaps weakens the outcome of the committees vision, but we feel that we must speak to the concerns that have risen for the last 8 years in the Nominating Committees past & present. We ask that North Pacific Yearly Meeting begin to consider the core of our regional organization, which is: *the Ministry, support, and the Oversight of the Monthly Meetings and the health of our Quaker Faith.*

The spiritual growth and development of our Quaker Faith is essential to the gathering of Friends in conference. This includes the faith within our business and the opportunity for decision with unity and worship.

How can we open our minds to difference and change?

As a group, can we find flexibility in matters of NPYM structural function?

Can we take these recommendations into our hearts and allow seasoning and prayer to be a part of our discernment?

Let us not react, but ponder with spirit before speaking our truth.

Testimonials:

“Quaker committee work, at any level, feels like deep worship/ sharing with the bonus of small group discernment in discovering the leading of the Spirit. The richness of experiencing collective spiritual work together lifts me up in profound ways.”

“Service to NPYM has given me opportunity to share my life long organizational skills (in charge of interest groups; in charge of worship sharing) and insights through leading interest groups and worship sharing. I have sought to affirm/stand behind the leadership team through the nominating process and at various gatherings. I have had a deep sense of calling (spiritual) to strengthen the wellbeing and connections of Friends gathered.”

“Service in the greater community of Friends has enriched my life far beyond what I ever expected. Advising youth of all ages changed and deepened my life and gave me a greater sense and connection with God, Devine Spirit. I continue to find transformation or new ideas and spiritual growth in serving on Committees and leadership roles -not to mention finding new friends among Friends.”

“I’m reflecting on how I grew up attending Annual Sessions of the old Pacific Yearly Meeting at sites that cycled from southern California to northern California to Oregon or Washington. Up through my Junior Friends years, I had no appreciation for the volunteer and behind-the-scenes work that was required to stage and event like Annual Session although I was aware of some activity in the Yearly Meeting office and the composition of a daily bulletin.

As an adult, I’ve developed a great appreciation for volunteers and committee members who hold the Yearly Meeting together between and during Annual Sessions. I feel that part of being a Quaker is actively participating in the maintenance and evolution of the Yearly Meeting structure. Being active in committees has introduced me to many Friends and acquainted me with their gifts and limitations. For

that, I am thankful and committed to maintain some level of activity at the Yearly Meeting level in addition to my local meeting commitments.”

“Serving at the yearly meeting level can feel like a burden to me. It almost invariably involves conference calls, which I dislike. There are too many emails. Figuring out a time when we all can meet can be frustrating. People don't always pull their weight (myself included.) Those are the responses I have to service that come from a grumpy, selfish place. My actual experience of service is really quite wonderful. I have learned so much about spiritual discernment, conflict resolution, and patience from my work with NPYM. Along the way, I have gotten to spend a lot of time with F/friends who have provided me with spiritual nourishment, practical support, kindness and mentoring through the course of our work together. And that richness keeps unfolding in my life long after service in a particular position has ended. I receive in return far more than I give.”

“When I first came to Quakers, I just liked the quiet and the people. I must admit that my first efforts of service to the YM were rather difficult. I was not sure of the expectations, or how to do the job. Then, as I grew in my monthly meeting and quarterly, I realized I could give to the larger organization. In fact now I love it because of the other people. I love working out the difficulties of getting along with everyone and making the process work. I now know that if not in this wonderful setting, where would I gain these skills for the world? It has been a gift of spirit to learn to listen to spirit in one another and to do the work we feel in common. From this experience, I am strengthened to participate more fully in the world.”