

Nominating Committee Report to NPYM Annual Session, July 2015

Friends,

Nominating Committee has a need for guidance and help.

I accepted the clerkship of Nominating Committee with a firm resolve: that I would not simply try to come up with names, but that I would make our work as rooted in the Spirit as possible. I failed.

Partly this is because of the size of our task. By our count, there are over one hundred positions in the whole NPYM structure, with forty to fifty needing to be filled in any given year. Moreover, many tasks seem so large that no one was willing to do them alone. Partly this is because we have turned again and again to the same few Friends to serve, and those Friends are getting tired. Partly this is because Nominating Committee itself has struggled to maintain its own numbers, with many members needing to step down. And partly this is because our committee grappled a problem that cuts to the heart of our process as Friends. Proper Quaker process is to lay out the task, seek out the Spirit, and let go of the outcomes. But Nominating Committee has tasks that cannot be postponed or let go.

Just because I failed, however, does not mean that the committee has failed. I have been lifted up by my members time and again. Nor does it mean that the Spirit failed. Indeed, the Spirit has been at work with us—if perhaps despite our process, not through it. So, while many critical positions still need to be filled, we do have a slate for approval, and we have confidence in it.

But we also feel that there are deep problems underneath our struggles. So we also bring queries for the yearly meeting, in hope that our struggle may bring the yearly meeting greater clarity and truth.

Are there ways to make the service of the yearly meeting more fulfilling? What holds Friends back from serving? We often found that Friends were unwilling to take on tasks as described, as they felt the work was too large for them. Sometimes we've found creative ways around this, but often this meant a group would take on a task formerly given to an individual—which leads back to the problem of continually relying on the same few Friends.

Is our hope of involving younger Friends realistic? What roles work for younger people? Few young people have served, and those who do don't always energize the committee. Is this because committees do not speak to the callings of the yearly meeting's youth? Is this because committees seek the energy of young people, but do

not seek their new light? Young Friends are few, and growing up in a turbulent time; is committee work too much for them? If so, then what should the yearly meeting do?

Finally, *What is the purpose of the yearly meeting?* We give much to maintaining the yearly meeting. Why? What is it for? If we put so much energy into continuing the yearly meeting's existence that we cannot carry out the yearly meeting's work, perhaps cannot even ask what that work should be, are we truly carrying out the Spirit's will? We are a great choir—but what is the song the Spirit wills us to sing?

We of Nominating Committee have no answers for these questions, but we feel called to raise them up, in hope that the Spirit will work among us once more.

Again, we of the committee offer our deep thanks for the help and guidance we have received along our way, and we offer our deep and abiding thanks to all those who have agreed to serve. As clerk, I in turn offer my deep thanks to the committee members for their steadfastness in the face of trouble. And we thank the Light for its eternal help and presence among us.

Paul Christiansen, Clerk
On behalf of the Nominating Committee
Asia Bennett
Joyce Zerwekh