

## FGC Representatives Report to SAYMA

June 2016

It is often helpful to have some historical background to fully appreciate current situations. In the mid 70's SAYMA discerned that affiliation with FGC was important. This discernment took several years of examining how SAYMA fit with other member yearly meetings in seeking to grow in our spiritual life. This affiliation was a two way street. FGC provided services to yearly meetings, and yearly meetings supported FGC with the service of representatives and financial support.

For many Friends, the primary connection with FGC was through attendance at the annual gathering. However, there have always been many other services that FGC provided to yearly meetings: connection with other yearly meetings with exchange of concerns and actions; religious education support for teachers and curriculum material; ministry and nurture experience for young and growing yearly meetings; representation of Friends in various ecumenical and interfaith events and organizations; Friends Meeting House Fund; and, finally, through the Bookstore and publication of books of interest to un-programed Friends.

It has been a hard year for Friends General Conference. Over the years, there have been opportunities to provide new and expanded services for Friends. We were able to do this work with the support of Friends' financial gifts, special funds and grants. It was hoped that this year at Central Committee we would be talking about expanding our programs and instead we heard from the wider community that we needed to be more clear about our core mission and not only tighten the focus of the programs but the budget as well. FGC is committed to responding to these concerns from the community. Several programs have been laid down or moved to independence as a result of the need for budget cuts but also to support the prudent expenditure of special funds and grants for specific projects. SAYMA Monthly Meetings and individual Friends have benefited from these various programs. Over the years many Friends have participated in the programs and served as facilitators and traveling ministers

Quaker Quest, the New Meeting project, traveling ministry and the Stewardship program have been laid down. The Bookstore has been

relocated to Pendle Hill and this collaboration has gone well. The ministry of the word continues. Couple Enrichment has become an independent organization with 21 active leader couples and will continue to offer workshops at Gathering

FGC is embracing these changes to foster new growth among Friends.

Programs that are continuing include the Gathering, the Quaker Cloud, the Ministry on Racism, Vanessa Julye is the staff person supporting this ministry and is here this year to support SAYMA's efforts to work on issues of racism, and religious education support through Faith and Play. More importantly, FGC is using the Internet to expand connection among Friends.

The FGC web site is a treasure of information and support. The Grow Our Meeting Resource and Activity Toolkit is readily available to any Meeting to use in sparking creativity and momentum with in their meeting. New Faith and Play stories will soon be available for children's programs.

FGC's Facebook page provides information about what is happening in other Yearly Meeting and what concerns and actions are being inspired by their spiritual paths.

An exciting new FGC program, Spiritual Deepening, will be available on-line in the fall. This has been in the piloting stage since last summer and has received overwhelmingly positive feedback. The program is designed to help us to be more grounded in the fundamentals of our faith so that our spiritual lives will be transformed through faithfulness and that we will be able to support seekers to explore the Quaker path.

Rebecca and Sharon serve as your current representatives. SAYMA is entitled to send three individuals as representatives to FGC, and we feel strongly that SAYMA should do so. Rebecca serves on the Nominating Committee and Sharon on the Development Committee. FGC committees, such as these two, complete their work in the spirit of worship. Providing a third representative to SAYMA will expand the variety of voices heard by FGC and broaden SAYMA's participation in the work of FGC. In addition to providing a third representative to FGC, we are asking that SAYMA spend time each year asking what the

organization would like to see from FGC so that your representatives can better serve both FGC and SAYMA. Finally, SAYMA, as a member of FGC, should continue to uphold its responsibility to support it financially.

Lastly, at last October's Central Committee, FGC approved the following organizational priorities: "fostering and nurturing collaboration among the Yearly and Monthly Meetings that are FGC, growth and strengthening the Religious Society of Friends and fostering inclusiveness in our communities." As SAYMA's representatives, we are committed to supporting FGC in these new goals and we ask that you join us in this work.