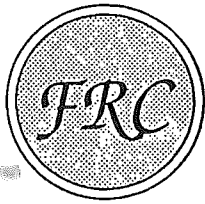


PASTORAL CARE NEWSLETTER



PUBLISHED BY THE FAMILY RELATIONS COMMITTEE
OF PHILADELPHIA YEARLY MEETING

For Overseers and others involved in pastoral care and counseling

Vol. I, No. 1

September, 1993

THE MINISTRY OF PASTORAL CARE

By Arlene Kelly

Over the past few decades I have been grateful for opportunities to interact with both those who provide pastoral care -- usually Overseers -- and also with persons who are the recipients of the meeting's care. Both groups have taught me a deep respect, indeed reverence, for the ways in which the healing Spirit works among us. Both have exposed me to the wisdom of others as they have sought to meet the challenges placed in front of them in a way which is consistent with our values as Friends.

In this, the first issue of the *Pastoral Care Newsletter*, I have been asked to lift up some of the major themes which I have heard over the years as individual Friends as well as meetings have tried to understand the meaning of pastoral care and to live into that ministry in a meaningful way. Knowing that these reflections are in no way complete, it is our hope that this newsletter may stimulate discussion in meetings on the issue of pastoral care, and that you will seek ways to share the fruits of those discussions by submitting your ideas for inclusion in future issues of this newsletter.

WHAT IS THE PASTORAL CARE NEWSLETTER?

The Pastoral Care Newsletter is a publication of the Family Relations Committee of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting. A grant from the Chace Fund is making it possible for four issues to be published during the 93/94 program year and for a complimentary copy to be provided to every Overseer within PYM.

Each issue will provide a substantive article focusing on some aspect of pastoral care as well as information on resources which Overseers might find of help. In subsequent issues there will be a column highlighting input from Overseers Committees. Its focus will be on successes and concerns.

Please help us to make this the lively opportunity for dialogue that we think it can be. Let us hear from you with your thoughts, reactions, successes and concerns.

The term "pastoral care" is not as common as some other Quaker language. Nevertheless, PYM's *Faith and Practice* states that, "Pastoral care and counseling are the special responsibility of Overseers." What is it that that phrase encompasses? Certainly it is the carrying out, on behalf of the meeting, of responsibilities in relation to membership and marriage. And still it is more. Pastoral care is the way in which we journey with each other in times of celebration, sadness, turmoil, transitions and along the quiet stretches. Together with our shared worship experience, it is the main glue which holds our meeting community together.

As Overseers Committees work to be more faithful and skillful in carrying out the ministry of pastoral care, I have heard the following three questions to be lifted up with regularity. Let us consider them as a starting point:

Question #1: How can I be of help in a difficult situation when I have no experience in it? Doesn't this require help from someone with more experience or training than myself?

It is, indeed, challenging to consider how to enter the lives of others at a time of crisis in a way that is caring and helpful. How do we journey with someone through the terminal illness or death of a loved one? How do we enter a marital crisis? What do we have to offer in situations of mental illness or substance abuse?

I have come to know that one essential ingredient is to recognize that we are not responsible for fixing the situation. Except for those few situations in which provision of some material aid is needed, we are not likely to be able to resolve the situation, but rather to be with the person or family in the midst of it. Our belief in the possibility of the Spirit being at work in this moment can be tremendously liberating if we allow ourselves to live into it. We are called to be instruments for the work of the living God; we are called to be channels through which

the Spirit can move. We are not responsible for determining what the outcome will be, for making the "right" thing happen any more than we are called to make a gathered meeting happen on Sunday morning. We are not called to be perfect; we are called to be present. How do we, in our Overseers meetings, corporately ground ourselves in that awareness?

It is also important for individual Overseers to be aware of their particular gifts. We are all gifted in different ways. More energy needs to be put into naming what it is we have to offer and less into feeling inadequate because we are not as good at something as another. Praying, accompanying, listening, problem solving and offering relief on concrete things are all ways of caring. A lovely story I heard many years ago was told by a woman who earlier in her family life had gone through the crisis of having one of her three young children hospitalized with a critical illness over several weeks. One day a meeting member arrived at her door and told her she was there to pick up the family's laundry. She took it, washed it, ironed it and returned it. There were no words about the sick child, but there was love and caring. How do we support each other in our Overseers Committees in naming and claiming our gifts?

Question #2: What right do I have to butt into someone else's business? Won't they tell us if they want us to know there's a problem?

Whenever I hear this question I think of the question which I have heard a multitude of times on the opposite side. *"Why, when I was having so much difficulty, did the meeting not reach out to me? Someone must*

<p>This Newsletter is published quarterly by the Family Relations Committee of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting. Trish Walat, clerk. For suggestions or to obtain additional copies, contact Helene Pollock, Editor, at (215) 988-0140.</p>

Services Offered by the Family Relations Committee

The Family Relations Committee and the Friends Counseling Service, which is under its care, provide a full range of services to assist meetings in carrying out pastoral care.

Consultation services, which assist meetings in developing a creative, caring response to particular problems of pastoral care, are provided by Friends experienced in the issue being addressed. The consultation takes place in person or by telephone. It can provide a sounding board for your ideas, an outside perspective on the situation, and an assessment of the skills needed to address the problem. Over the past few years meetings have sought consultation on issues such as dealing with difficult members, conflict within the meeting community, situations of sexual harassment and/or abuse, as well as issues of mental health and substance abuse.

Workshops are available for individual meeting committees, such as Overseers, as a resource for deepening their skills in pastoral care. Overseers workshops may focus on such issues as clearness for marriage, death and dying, the meaning of membership, etc. Workshops are also available for the meeting as a whole, and may address such topics as strengthening the meeting as a caring community, enhancing communication/creative listening, or dealing with anger and conflict. Each workshop is tailored to the particular needs of the meeting or meeting committee.

Counseling. Counseling needs of members and attenders may at times exceed what overseers can provide. In such instances, counseling services are available for individuals, couples and families through the Friends Counseling Service. Experienced, professionally trained counselors are geographically dispersed throughout the Yearly Meeting area. All counselors are active Friends whose spiritual lives are integral to their approach to counseling. Service fees are adjusted according to the client's ability to pay. Service is never denied because of a person's lack of means.

Counselors are listed below:

Henry Beck, Ph.D.

Bala Cynwyd, PA
(215) 664-5443

Terence Carroll, ACSW

Philadelphia, PA
(215) 473-2600

Kathryn L. Ellis, Ed.D.

Carlisle, PA
(717) 258-6519

Teresa A. Glatthorn, M.A.

Hatboro, PA
(215) 672-6627

Winifred S. Hope, M.Ed, M.S.S.

King of Prussia, PA
(215) 293-9720

Gary M. Johnson, Ph.D.

Wilmington, DE
(302) 656-1295

Arlene Kelly, ACSW

Philadelphia, PA
(215) 988-0140

Deborah Osborne-Daily, M.Ed.

Philadelphia, PA
(215) 248-0489

Judith Owens, M.A.

Voorhees, NJ
(609) 768-4114

John Ries, M.A.

Quakertown & Reading, PA
(215) 538-9111

Karin Sannwald, ACSW

Berlin, NJ
(609) 767-6471

James J. Saxon, Ph.D.

Swarthmore, PA
(215) 544-9634

John Scardina, Ed.M.

Doylestown/Westtown
(215) 399-9793

Alexander Scott, ACSW

Valley Forge, PA
(215) 983-3617

Barbara T. Snipes, M.A.

Morrisville, PA &
Riverton, NJ (215) 428-0315

Ann Swain, M.S.W.

Glen Mills, PA
(215) 399-1977

Fran Van Allen, M.A.

Philadelphia & Media, PA
(215) 358-3212

Lindley M. Winston, M.D.

Malvern, PA
(215) 647-1237

For further information on any of the services provided by the Family Relations Committee, contact Arlene Kelly at (215)988-0140, or write in care of Family Relations Committee, 1515 Cherry Street, Philadelphia, PA 19102.

Save the Date!

Overseers Conference

Saturday, December 4 , at Providence Meeting, Media, PA

This conference, which is sponsored by the Family Relations Committee, will provide a time for Overseers to share wisdom and concerns. Topics for discussion will include the following:

- Integrating young people into the life of the Meeting*
- Overseers' role in developing a sense of community*
- Dealing with separation and divorce*
- Supporting marriages*

Details to follow

Other events sponsored by Family Relations Committee

Couples Enrichment Retreats led by Brad Sheeks and Pat McBee, September 24-26 and October 3-5 at Cape May, NJ.

A Retreat For Men, entitled "A Gathering to Explore the Healing of Our Lives" led by Brad Sheeks, November 5-7, at Cape May, NJ, .

Parenting Workshops led by Harriet Heath. At Radnor Monthly Meeting, Sundays, September 26 through November 21; and at Lansdowne Friends School, Wednesdays, September 29 through November 17.

For information on registration and fees, call (215)988-0140.

Other items of interest to overseers

A Quaker Ministry to Persons with AIDS volunteer training program November 10-14 at 4th and Arch Street Meeting House. For more information contact the PYM AIDS Working Group at 241-7238.

Workshop on Racism at Lansdowne Friends Meeting, October 15-16. For more information contact Carolyn Coates 352-4477 or Kemi Turek 789-5603.

have noticed that I was not coming to meeting, When I was there I would cry in worship. I couldn't ask for help. I felt so alone. Why didn't someone let me know they cared?"

We need to consider seriously who we are truly protecting when we have an overly strong caution about intruding. Very often, I think, we are protecting ourselves. Because we do not feel confident of our ability to express our caring well, we hold back and tell ourselves that the other person would not want us bothering them.

An act of true caring is never intrusive. It may be awkward. It may not be fully received by the other at the time. But it is never intrusive. Admittedly, true caring, i.e., love, is something which needs to be nurtured within us. It can only flow fully when we suspend our judgment and leave judgment in God's hands. Erich Fromm put it well when he said, "It is not enough 'to love', it is not enough 'to want the best' for another living being. . .[U]nless I can let go of my wish to control, my love becomes destructive. Love is always an active concern for the growth and aliveness of the one we love."

How does each of us come to know ourself and to heal our own woundedness, in order that we can approach another in the time of their need, by being fully present to them? How do we witness to our trust that the Spirit can work in a healing way in their life. Our role is to be a channel for that work rather than to control the outcome? What do we do as an Overseers Committee to ensure that all we do in pastoral care springs from this place of centeredness? What are the ways in which we work to develop some of the skills in listening, opening hard subjects etc. which will give us more confidence to enter a situation of need?

Question #3: Why don't people let us know when they're having difficulty? Why do we so often find out after the fact?

This question is related to the previous one, but it lifts up different facets of the issue of how to discern and respond to the need for help. This question leads into another question -- one which I seldom hear asked, but which I feel we need to address with a great deal more intentionality. That is: How can we deepen and strengthen our meeting as a community?

If we do not have a sense of community in our meeting -- a reality which becomes the context for all else -- then we can be pretty sure that we have not developed a climate of trust and safety which will allow people to acknowledge the vulnerability they feel in times of need. Pastoral care involves finding ways to nurture vital authentic relationships among our members and attenders so that when problems arise the relationships are already in place to provide a context for exploring the problems. A meeting's attention to queries such as the following may help.

Queries related to the sense of community in the meeting:

--How do we wish to be perceived by our members, by visitors? Do we feel satisfied that people's impressions are consistent with the way we wish to be perceived? If not, why not? How might we work toward a greater consistency?

--What does it mean to be a member of this meeting? What is the responsibility of the meeting to its members? What does an individual or family have a right to expect of their meeting? What is the responsibility of the member to the meeting? When there is disappointment of expectation on either side, what is a creative way to deal with this?

--What does it mean to be married under the care of the meeting? What is the role of the meeting and specifically of the clearness committee? What is expected of the couple? Does the meeting, through its clearness committee or some other means consider itself to have an ongoing relationship, to which it attends, with couples it marries?

It is important for Overseers to provide leadership in enabling the meeting to address queries such as these. To begin with, a sense of community is not possible without a sense of common identity, a sense of what binds us together. The meeting's answers to these queries, can, at the very least, identify common expectations for behavior that can help individuals in exercising their gifts within the life of the community. At most, the meetings' answers to these queries can serve as a mandate for those who act on behalf of the meeting. For example, if the meeting has not developed a shared understanding of what it means to be married under the care of the meeting, then a given clearness committee does not know how thorough or superficial a clearness process to undertake. Then, when a particular committee encounters an unusual or difficult situation, it will be operating in uncharted waters. In addition to the lack of experience with the particular problem, the committee will not know what the meeting expects of it. In my experience, it is the committee's lack of clarity about the expectation of the meeting which is often more immobilizing than the situation itself. That immobilization can keep the response from being full and caring. Such situations of lack of clarity often are the cause of tremendous hurt in the meeting.

Developing a sense of community within the meeting does not occur simply as a result of our working together on committees nor, indeed, simply as a result of worshipping together. If a sense of community is to be developed there must be opportunities to come to know each other outside the roles which we usually play within the meeting, and there must be opportunities for sharing in some depth. A few of the creative ways which some meetings have found to nurture the life of the meeting in this way are: (1) Friendly Eights; (2) meeting-sponsored gatherings for the discussion of common concerns of particular clusters of people, such as parents or couples; or (3) an annual "meeting weekend" in which folks come together for planned programs, meals, recreation and in-between times of being able

to chat. *What are the ways which your meeting has found to be effective in developing a sense of community?*

In conclusion, in this article I have described pastoral care as a ministry offering care and support to all persons who are part of the meeting family, as well as a ministry which considers the well being of the meeting collectively. How that ministry is best carried out will vary according to factors such as the meeting size, the range and concentration of age groups, the transiency or permanency of the meeting constituency, the amount of diversity, whether the meeting is in a time of transition, a spurt of growth etc:

There is no one right way to carry out the ministry of pastoral care. As you search for a sense of what pastoral care is for your particular meeting, we hope you will share your insights, questions and concerns with us.

Arlene Kelly, who has served as an Overseer in Central Philadelphia Monthly Meeting for the past twenty-five years, has been Coordinator of the Friends Counseling Service of the Family Relations Committee for the past seventeen years. See also Arlene Kelly's article "Strengthening Our Meeting as a Caring Community" in the October, 1984, issue of Friends Journal.

Questions for Reflection and Discussion

1. What are the aspects of pastoral care that we carry out most effectively in our meeting?
2. Are there aspects of pastoral care discussed in the article by which we feel challenged?
3. Is there a sense that we need to deepen our understanding of pastoral care in the meeting? If so, what would help?
4. What do I experience to be my particular gifts which I bring to being an Overseer?
5. What is our sense of how fully we are succeeding in being a caring community in which there is a sense of safety and trust? If I was struggling with a crisis in my life, would I be willing to share it with people in the meeting whom I trust?