

Report to Permanent Board from the Presiding Clerk

September 19, 2020

Sessions: We did it! We pivoted to an on-line Annual Sessions and, with a relatively short timeline were able to set the table for a Sessions which, with a few exceptions, worked remarkably well. While we were optimistic about having a good number people, we really didn't know whether we would have 50 or 500, or 1000. In the end we had relatively similar numbers to in-person sessions. Business agenda was shortened and focused and, overall, Friends seemed to appreciate the change, at least given the format. Many of us felt that there was much greater connection and continuity between the various pieces, including plenary, bible half-hours, business agenda, and home groups. I appreciated that in the second year of our practice of noticing patterns, many friends other than those specifically appointed to the work, were noticing and naming patterns.

In a few areas we fell down a bit – options for Sunday worship were limited and communication was confusing; in our planning meetings we had touched on Friends' desire to gather informally, but had not made space for this. We also heard that there were a few micro-aggressions during home groups, not all of which were handled well.

While it is much too soon to name how, I believe many aspects of our experience in planning these virtual sessions will inform planning for next year when we will, God willing, be able to gather in-person. Framing and setting the agenda, and training small-group facilitators being two examples.

Post-Sessions work: Since Sessions approved forwarding two documents to Monthly Meetings for their consideration and discernment, I am shepherding this process. A letter will go out soon, which contains both the documents and an overview of how the work will be supported. As allowed by Sessions, I have met with interested and knowledgeable parties to edit the recommendations which will accompany the Letter of Apology to Native Americans. I am expecting that Leslie will report at this same PB Meeting about some suggested changes to the Reparations working group, which will both assemble written and video resources for the work, and will themselves act as resources to MM's.

Similarly, the Earthcare Ministries and Racial, Social, and Economic Justice committees will be assembling resources for work related to their "Call to Urgent Loving Action", and will act as resources on call for Monthly Meetings.

In both cases, I have arranged meetings with interested parties and staff, to ensure alignment between goals and intentions, and what staff support is needed.

Coordinating and Advisory: C&A held its annual end-of-summer retreat. Of course this had to be by Zoom. Since we have two new members- Scot Drysdale is now clerk of Finance, and Jeremiah Dickinson is Interim clerk of Ministry and Counsel- it is important to take some time to welcome them and begin to build some sense of community.

We did some visioning, and naming of priorities. Since our shepherding of the Purpose and Procedure process was interrupted by the pandemic, this is one piece of work we will be tending to in the coming year.

On-going: And finally I will add that our relationship with Friends United Meeting remains very much on my mind. I continue to reflect on how best to encourage a re-framing of the concerns, and how to prepare for expected discernment at next year's sessions. I am open to Friends reflections on this subject.