

**Report to BYM Interim Meeting  
From Program Committee  
“Pay as Led” financing for Annual Session  
June 2019**

Program Committee has begun research into the experience of other yearly meetings who have begun using a “pay as led” (PAL) model for funding fees for Annual Session.

These YMs have moved to this system:

New England YM	2014
Inter Mountain YM	2018
North Pacific YM	2018
New York YM	2019

**What is Pay as Led: An Experiment with Abundance**

Pay as Led (PAL) has both spiritual and practical roots. It starts from a desire to make sessions more financially possible for more people, and thus more inclusive. It springs from a sense that by making sessions accessible financially to more people we can be a more welcoming community. It recognizes that needing to ask for financial assistance is actually a barrier to attending for some people. It acknowledges that while some Friends require assistance to attend, many others could pay more/give more than the rates that are set. It addresses and may simplify the sometimes complicated methods traditionally used for scholarship assistance (monthly meeting assistance, YM assistance, work grants etc.). There is a hope that PAL will lead to increased attendance, thus strengthening the YM.

Abundance is defined as “an amount or supply more than sufficient to meet one's needs.” (Merriam-Webster) Spiritually, PAL invites us to take a leap of faith that our financial needs can be met, or exceeded, when individual Friends prayerfully discern (with guidance) how much they can pay.

NYYM Pay as Led is a way of acknowledging that wealth is not distributed evenly among Quakers. It offers us a method of increasing the number of people who attend Sessions, as people who can afford to pay more can do so, enabling those who need to pay less to do so. We believe Pay as Led will enrich our community by allowing the inclusion of new gifts and perceptions, particularly from those who are financially challenged by geography, employment, or stage of life. This will strengthen NYYM.

NEYM ...an opportunity to bear witness to our faith in God’s abundance, hoping to make our annual gathering more financially accessible to all Friends.

NPYM Abundant Financing is where we all contribute according to our ability, until the pot is full and there is an abundance to make everything happen. We seek to encourage all in our Yearly Meeting to attend Annual Session, so all can benefit from and appreciate our many spiritual gifts and Light. Cost of attendance should not be a barrier in our individual decisions to attend.

**How does PAL work**

Each YM has their own version of PAL. In most cases, being fully informed of the full costs, registrants are given several options for payment. For instance, NPYM indicates four choices, with suggested dollar amounts for the first three:

1. “traditional”: the base cost for room and board + program fees
2. “sustaining”: fee above and beyond the traditional
3. “limited income”: fee below the traditional
4. “pay as led”: to pay more or less than any of the above

Monthly Meetings often provide individuals with support to attend YM sessions. IMYM encouraged their MMs to donate directly to the YM those funds which in the past had supported individuals. All MM funds could then be pooled to support individuals (from any MM) to attend. NEYM previously used an "Equalization Fund" to which individuals and MMs contributed. This was then used for individual scholarships in a burdensome process matching individuals with MM contributions. Their PAL method includes space for (and relies upon) those same donations, but as with IMYM, the funds are pooled to be used by and for the whole.

In all these YMs, Friends were eager to try a new system. A level of comfort was provided because each YM had reserves they could draw on if insufficient funds were received.

NPYM reported that they had always covered costs for kids and JYM staff, and continued to do so.

### **Results/Successes**

NEYM saw increase in numbers, more than covered costs for first time in many years. Income and attendance were not as high the second year, but still higher than in the years prior to PAL. Saw progress in welcoming more Friends who can now afford to attend.

IMYM had budgeted for \$5-10,000 deficit, came in very close to budget (\$1,300 deficit); attendance up 10%. 11% increase in attenders; 51% more newcomers; 55% more YAFs.

NPYM netted a surplus of \$7,000.

All three YMs are continuing to use this funding model. Evaluations were extremely positive.

### **Concerns/Issues/Practical Matters**

In all cases there was substantial seasoning of the leading to move to PAL (format of which varied from one YM to another). All mentioned the need for extensive education and communication about the change, both to individuals and to MMs who were being asked to contribute in a different way (to the pool of support funds, not to individuals as in the past). There was careful thought given to the descriptive language and how costs were described.

IMYM Important to provide opportunities to study philosophy/theology of PAL, as well as brass tacks.

NPYM ...people need to be educated about it and also to approach it from a spirit-based place; it's not "money in, money out," it's part of our faith, our integrity, our living simply, our community; need to approach this from a spirit-led place both as individuals and as monthly meetings.

There were various technical issues involving registration which needed to be ironed out.

### **Next Steps**

In the coming year Program Committee looks forward to a wide exploration of this idea amongst BYM Friends. We will continue to gather information from other YMs. We will hold interest groups at Annual Session this August. We will consult with Stewardship and Finance, Development, and other committees. We expect to have a sub-committee made up of Program Committee members as well as other individuals we invite to help us further season this proposal. If you would like to talk with us about this idea, or perhaps serve on the exploratory sub-committee, please contact committee clerk, Barb Platt, jrpb47quaker@gmail.com

Friends Journal has published 2 articles about PAL, found here:

Re: New England YM, 11/2015 <https://www.friendsjournal.org/an-experiment-with-abundance/>

Re: Intermountain YM, 2/2019 <https://www.friendsjournal.org/paying-as-led/>