

General Secretary's Report to Winter Interim Meeting 2024

Friends –

Greetings from the desk of the General Secretary. I look forward to gathering with you, in body and in Spirit, at our Winter Interim Meeting on 23 3mo 2024. My report to you today is organized within the categories of responsibilities included in the job description for the General Secretary. As always, my door is open, and I look forward to hearing from you.

RESPONSIBILITIES FOR THE STAFF

2023 Staff Annual Reviews will be complete next Friday. Annual Feedback Sessions with Supervisory Committee are already complete and reflected in the Supervisory Committee Annual Report.

The staff met for our annual retreat in December. We used our time together to revisit our shared agreements for the ways we would like to function as a team, to explore habits of white culture in the context of both Quakerism and non-profit organizations, and to explore some of the systemic challenges of our Yearly Meeting and how experience those as staff. We also enjoyed fellowship and worship sharing, and Friends noted that this time “all together” is invaluable.

The payroll system transition is complete. We were notified in the fall that our payroll provider was existing the payroll business, and we were forcibly transitioned to a new provider in October. The transition is now complete and has, delightfully, created administrative efficiencies in the employee-facing tools such as timesheets and paystub access. However, this will be our first summer season on the new system – adding 150+ individuals into payroll each year is a big task. I am relieved to be able to delegate this to the new Camping Program Associate in 2024. Payroll, Benefits, and all HR functions came under the General Secretary after the elimination of the Associate General Secretary position.

Three vacancies have been successfully filled since our Fall Interim Meeting in November:

1. Nikki Holland has started as our new Development Manager, replacing Mary Braun who left BYM in February 2023.
2. Randy Mattern will begin as the Camping Program Associate the first week of May. This position was approved in 2023
3. We have extended an offer to a candidate for the Opequon Caretaker, a half-time role, which we expect to be accepted. We expect the new hire to begin in the role immediately.

Supervisory Committee and I have made significant progress on Undoing Racism [Items of Redress](#). These items for redress were developed by Khalila Lomax, former STRIDE Coordinator, and myself in response to the racism Khalila experienced while working for BYM.

WORKING WITH COMPONENTS OF BYM

2023 Community Statistics will be collected over the new few months using the old form. Work to revise the form and create an online submission form have been delayed by other pressing priorities. The Administrative Associate, Lucy Azenga, will be working toward a new form for the collection of 2024 statistics in early 2025 .

The BYM 2023 Yearbook will go to the printer by the end of March. As reported to you the same time last year, the Yearbook – and its ambitious scope - is extremely difficult to produce without the assistance of an Associate General Secretary.

The updated Faith & Practice is available as a PDF on the BYM website and will be available on Kindle and paper copy by mid-April. Meetings will receive printed copies by mail. Additional copies will be available to order through Amazon PrintOnDemand.

The End of Life Working Group book, *A Tender Time*, is nearing publication. In collaboration with Patti Nesbitt, Lucy and I will be distributing 2 free copies to all BYM Meetings. Additional copies will be available through Pendle Hill, Kindle, Amazon, and additional Quaker booksellers. Sarah, Nikki, and Patti will be writing an additional grant in April to support further printing and distribution costs beyond the original grant received from Friends Foundation for the Aging.

The post-holidays Committee Season is in full-swing. The busiest season for Committees is late winter through Annual Session in August. I am attending and supporting the following Committees:

1. Supervisory Committee, bi-monthly
2. Supervisory Clerks Check-In, bi-monthly
3. Presiding & Interim Clerks Check-In, bi-weekly
4. Stewardship & Finance Committee, monthly
5. Trustees Committee, bi-monthly
6. Program Committee, bi-monthly (new GenSec responsibility in 2021)
7. Development Committee, monthly (new GenSec responsibility 2023)
8. Other Committees as Requested (aprx. 1-2/month)

The database transition will be complete by the end of April. We began working on this in the winter of 2023. The transition was required learning our existing database, which is more than a decade old, was no longer being supported by its parent company. The new database will make it much easier to maintain Monthly Meeting committee clerking information, a task formerly done by the Associate General Secretary, and to maintain accurate donor records. In 2025, the new database will integrate with our bookkeeping software, creating efficiencies for Administration, Development, and Finance.

FUNDRAISING & MANAGING RESOURCES

Implementation of a new BYM Approved Driver Protocol is complete. After a change in our institutional insurance provider last year, BYM must now maintain our own list of approved drivers in compliance with the insurance requirements. Previously, the list was maintained for us by the insurance provider. Anyone who drives a BYM-owned vehicle or drives youth as part of a BYM program will be required to complete an annual background check and annual driving record screening with the General Secretary, in addition to complying with the Trustees Driving Policy. If you have previously been an approved driver for BYM, you must complete a new screening before you can drive a BYM vehicle or program participants. Please contact me.

We have begun a quarterly Safety Committee Meeting to review safety and risk management across BYM programs. This committee is required by our new institutional insurance provider. In addition to discussing seasonal safety topics, the meeting is a place to review safety incidents to identify improvements to policies and process and to prevent similar incidents in the future. This is currently a

staff-based meeting, with reports made to Supervisory Committee and other respective committees as incidents come up.

I have been a close partner in the Special Campaign for Opequon Quaker Camp. With assistance from Barbara Wille, Development Consultant, and the fabulous Special Campaign Committee, we have secured \$400,000 the \$700,000 goal to date. The campaign will officially launch – and make the push toward the final goal - at Annual Session.

Year End Financials look good – ending the year with a positive balance of over \$150,000 for the 3rd year in a row. BYM did pay out two staff severances in 2023 with the departure of the Development Director and STRIDE Coordinator, which pushed personnel costs over budget. A few other budget lines were over budget, which the General Secretary will explore with Stewardship & Finance as we build the 2025 budget.

The Clerk of Trustees and I are in the very early stages of exploring the possibility of relocating the BYM Office to a building on the property of one of our Quaker neighbors. The BYM Office is now 60 years old and will need some major maintenance over the next 5-10 years including a new roof, repair of dry rot, and drainage issues that are impacting the foundation. In addition, staff have continued to work a hybrid schedule since the pandemic, which leaves most of the office spaces unused for more days than they are occupied. In addition, Supervisory Committee has been unable to staff a volunteer Building Maintenance Committee, which leaves the General Secretary responsible for all maintenance and repairs of the building and for arranging grounds care for the 2.8 acres. If either party is interested, selling the building and land to either of our neighbors – Friends House or Sandy Spring Friends School – would create income-generating revenue for BYM, maintain the donor intent for the land, and relocate staff to a smaller but more manageable space on the grounds of Sandy Spring Meeting, the school, or the retirement community. No decisions are on the immediate horizon, but the consideration feels worthwhile.

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

Early this month, I fell at home, resulting in a mild-concussion. The doctor recommended complete rest for a minimum of 3 days, preferably a week – which simply wasn't possible given my responsibilities. I was able to take half-days for 3 days and stay off screens during that time and many Friends expressed their care and concern. However, the inability to take full, emergency time off was a wakeup call to me about the unsustainability of my service to BYM. I love my work and this community, and I hope to serve you for years to come. I worry that will not be possible unless we commit ourselves to Long-Term Planning that clarifies the priorities (and non-priorities) of the Yearly Meeting and reduces the complexity of our structures. Obviously, I cannot lead a strategic planning process when I cannot even find time to rest after a head injury. As many of our Committees, Monthly Meetings, and our Clerks similarly labor under a shortage of human capacity, I find myself wondering **how might we, as a beloved body, free up the time and space to step back and consider what we want to do for one another and the world with the resources we have?**

Yours in joyful service,
Sarah G.