

Program Committee Report to June 2020 BYM Interim Meeting

Program Committee is responsible for planning our Annual Sessions, excluding business meetings. We work throughout the year to plan and implement a fun, dynamic and inspiring program. Our goal is to support and strengthen BYM thru building community and offering opportunities for fellowship, surrounding our meetings for worship with a concern for business. The theme for this year's gathering is: *Courage, Faith, and Hope to Love Across our Differences*. Full program information is in the spring *Interchange* which you should have received online or in the postal mail.

In mid-March, in response to the covid-19 pandemic, Program Committee made the very difficult decision to cancel our in-person gathering for 2020. This is the first time Annual Session has been cancelled since 1918, when Baltimore Yearly Meeting, Hicksite branch, was cancelled during the Spanish flu pandemic.

We have an opportunity, however, that wasn't available in 1918: to go virtual. Many other Quaker gatherings are doing the same. BYM will hold our Annual Session online, via zoom (or other video technology format), beginning with the retreat July 27-28, and with formal sessions running July 28-August 2. We will also provide "Pre-session" programming during the week of July 20-24. We invite all members and attenders of BYM to participate, and expect and hope that the online format will allow for Friends who typically don't travel to Annual Session to join us this year.

As you will have seen in the *Interchange*, our daily program will be much shorter than usual. We have tried to keep some of everything, from plenaries, to workshops, to Junior Yearly Meeting programs for children and youth. Business sessions will only be 1.5 hours in length. This will require thorough preparation by all in attendance. Please read your advance reports. Plan to attend pre-session opportunities to hear reports and listen to one another to help season our decision-making. In addition to workshop opportunities on July 22 and July 24, the exact program for pre-session events will be sent out in July.

Program Committee also decided to use Pay as Led financing to cover expenses. The suggested fee is \$100, to cover any and all programs you wish to attend. Please consider your own financial circumstances, and pay that amount, or any amount more or less that you are led to pay. This financing models helps all of us participate, as some who can pay more assist with the costs of those who pay less. Amounts above \$100 are considered donations to BYM.

Jason Eaby, from Nottingham Monthly Meeting, is heading up our technology sub-committee. We are seeking volunteers who are knowledgeable about using video technology platforms to assist with tech trainings which are planned daily. Please email Jason at jeeaby@outlook.com if you can volunteer or recommend others.

Program Committee met via zoom 5 times in April and May to address and plan for our virtual Annual Session, and will continue to meet in June and July. We also reached out and consulted with other Quaker groups who had already met virtually or are planning to. We usually meet only 4 times a year, handling our business via email in between meetings. This spring we had a lot of hard thinking, many challenges, and difficult decisions to make in a short time period. Every single part of our usual program had to be re-thought, and re-created for a virtual format. I want to thank all the members of the committee who are continuing to dedicate much more time than is typically required to planning for our Annual Session this year.

Barb Platt, Program Committee clerk