

**General Secretary's Report to  
BYM Interim Meeting  
9 10mo. 2021**

Friends -

I am writing this report to you just a few days after finishing my 90th day as General Secretary of BYM. What a wonderful and busy three months it has been! From learning all of our administrative systems and committees to getting to know our staff and programs, my days - and my heart - have been full.

Wayne Finegar generously stayed on with BYM as a consultant through the month of September to help ease the transition. If you have the good fortune to see Wayne at Interim Meeting today, please continue to wrap him in the gratitude and care of the Yearly Meeting. His deep sense of servant leadership leaves a lasting legacy at BYM, and I feel lucky to have had so much time to learn from him.

I have also felt remarkably lucky to join an organization that is in a healthy financial position. This is a rarity in non-profit leadership transitions. With much credit to the work of Wayne, Ned Stowe, Mary Braun, Margo Lehmann, Trustees, Stewardship & Finance, Development, the entire Camping program, and the generosity and work of many Friends, BYM weathered the economic storm caused by the Covid pandemic. We are entering the final quarter of the fiscal year with good cash flow and even the possibility of a small year-end surplus, which can supplement our reserves.

Our Clerk of Interim Meeting asked me to speak to the biggest challenges I see facing the Yearly Meeting. Let me begin by noting the flip side of our strong financial position. We balanced our books, in large part, by right-sizing our staffing to meet our current fundraising and apportionment capacity. With the elimination of the Comptroller and Assistant General Secretary roles, the Finance Manager and General Secretary are now each doing the work of at least two people. While we "right-sized" our staffing *numbers*, we have not yet "right-sized" staffing *responsibilities*, and this presents a challenge going forward. What work of the Yearly Meeting office are we willing to give up to meet the new reality of staff capacity? Another way to approach this challenge is through the mindset of abundance: How might we embrace this change? What can we do with what we have in abundance? What is most alive and growing right now? What might we allow to lie fallow? I am eager to hear from Friends on this matter!

Another challenge I see facing BYM is the tension of urgent work in lean times. During my first 90 days, many Friends have talked to me about our real and desperate need for long-term planning, major investments in camp, and bold steps on anti-racism. Other Friends have spoken of deep desires to save our shrinking Society, prepare spiritually for the changing world, and resolve painful conflicts among us. I have also found myself caught in fever dreams of so much urgent work - often demanding more of myself than time and my human body will allow. But we can only move at the speed of trust, as Black feminist adrienne maree brown reminds us. Yet, I

am new to you, as you are new to me. And these long months of physical separation have weakened our bonds of friendship, the global trauma of the pandemic has depleted our emotional reserves, and we continue to live under the trust-crushing weight of 529 years of white supremacy on Turtle Island. I believe the work ahead will require us to deepen trust: to renew our friendships, soothe our central nervous systems, abide in the Light of Love, and uproot the racism within.

Coincidentally, I am enrolled in Steve Angell's Quaker history course at Earlham School of Religion this semester. Each time I go for a long walk with a BYM elder or flip through a past Yearbook in search of some archival fact, I do so with awe for the Religious Society we have been and the Religious Society we are becoming. Our early Quaker ancestors lived an eschatological theology - they understood themselves to be living at the end of time and thus turned themselves over to the Inward Light. 371 years after George Fox was jailed for this quaking blasphemy, the last 18 months have often felt to me as though we too are living at the end of ordinary times. As I look into the year ahead, I find myself thinking perhaps it *is* time for the ordinary to pass away. Where white supremacy has been the ordinary order of America (and our Society of Friends), let those times pass away. Where environmental destruction and extraction capitalism have been the ordinary way of doing business, may those times, too, pass away. Where conflict is met with war and poverty with policing, let those ordinary times be over. As we move from ordinary times to extraordinary times and the chance to build the world anew, I pray that I might stay grounded in this profound message of the Gospels - in the kin-dom of God, the old, oppressive ways are subverted and replaced with liberation and with love.

Yours in service,  
Sarah G.