

GenSec Report to PYM Councils September 2018

2018 Annual Sessions

Snapshots

There were around 325 people in attendance including adults, children, staff and representatives and visitors. There were around 30 children and 15 young adults. This was a smaller turnout than previous years. Baltimore and New York also had lower registration numbers this year.

Excellent (Don't change a thing.) 18.33%

Good (Very little improvement is needed.) 65%

Fair (Some improvement is needed.) 15%

Poor (Lots of improvement is needed.) 6.67%

- We received feedback from 62 Friends who provided the following general ratings:
- There were two areas about which respondents provided the most feedback across all of the questions when given the opportunity to comment. The first was about the joy of fellowship which is often given significant mention in Sessions reviews and the second was appreciation, mostly, for our business, the clerking and our struggles. Excerpts of the comments on each of these are below.
 - **Fellowship:** Loved hanging out with friends after dark; Fellowship over meals; I go by myself and sit with people I don't know; chance to meet new people and catch up with old friends; Meeting new people, especially when there was time for meaningful interaction with them; sharing ideas with friends; seeing Friends from other Meetings; getting to chat with members of the community I hadn't met with before; Opportunities for fellowship and connection.
 - **Business:** Seeing factions find some common ground; The painful honesty during business sessions; Quality of clerking; How the assistant clerks stepped into the void of Penny's absence to carry on the work; Small group sharing activities in Meeting for Worship for Business; I really liked how there was enough time on the Agenda to deal with things; Our work in Meeting for Business to address our oppression issues; The beautiful way the 3 clerks worked, interacted and supported each other; This year I was so happy to have the Listening sessions; Witnessing Quaker Process on a larger level the people and the way people worked with a situation if it didn't go to plan; I wanted Business sessions where people could express themselves and their experience instead of clerks dominating the microphone AND the narrative; The excellent clerking of meetings for business; The meaningful thing was the listening session on Sat. afternoon; The difficult parts of business sessions; I liked the balance although I did miss the items for business. It seemed we spent a lot of time preparing for business, but did very little business. I guess we were healing this year. Good idea; The movement of the Spirit during MFW for Business.
- Other areas that people referred to with some frequency were the benefits of the pre-Sessions retreat; appreciation for the youth programs and the All Together Time; appreciation for the sessions facilitated by Amanda Kemp and by Walter Hjelt Sullivan and the various opportunities for small group discussion.

- The two concerns that were referred to with frequency were the food and the lack of time for community, fellowship and interaction. I'll not share specific negative comments about the food which were all along the lines of wanting more variety, higher quality and better signage.
 - Need for More Fellowship: I would appreciate more time for relaxed interaction with Friends and for reflection. More time for "Evening Fellowship"; There continues to be a need for structured fellowship time...worship sharing can be a precious opportunity to build connection and this year it felt rushed/sandwiched or shoehorned in and not given the space it profits from; I was surprised at how often I said hello to Friends I didn't know, and they didn't reply. Some Friends were very nice, but many seemed a bit reluctant to meet someone they didn't already know.
- Other areas for growth or improvement that were mentioned multiple times include a desire for more worship ("More worship ... always more worship –I've been saying that for upwards of thirty years now"); more music and better music; the fire drill mishap; commuting restricts opportunities to participate fully.

Something Different about these Sessions

Most reports heard by staff and the Leadership Team about the 2018 Annual Sessions indicate that Friends in attendance experienced them differently from the Continuing and Annual Sessions of recent years. One comment in the online evaluation provides a nice encapsulation of the comments: *During the initial reception of the clerk's Multicultural Audit Committee report I was distraught! I felt such a severance in our relationships among each other & with G!d. And THEN!!! more faithful Friends than I remained together to listen & love each other back into Community!!!!*

There are a number of variables that were different about these Sessions from the start that may be useful to hold in our awareness as we continue on our path of listening and loving into community.

- Rather than a single clerk there was a team of three alternate clerks presiding with the support of the council clerks, the treasurer and the General Secretary. There was both a whole team supporting the clerks and none of the clerks were responsible for the full week.
- The agenda in recent years has become more focused on reports but the summer's agenda included more interactive conversation and discernment. Some Friends have expressed a desire for more and felt there was space for far more discussion and less talk from the clerks bench.
- There was a 24-hour spiritually grounding retreat prior to sessions in which Friends went deep and committed to serving as elders throughout the sessions helping to hold the space.
- The three councils had been meeting together for six months prior to Sessions and their members have more relationship with one another than previously.
- The Leadership has been identifying patterns we engage in within the team, the council meetings and the larger community that narrow rather than expand our capacity and then support taking different steps.
- A sprint put together a clear document on minutes practices which was distributed to every sessions attender and referred to at each business session.
- The fewer people in attendance at Sessions may has supported a more intimate experience.

Database Conversion

WE WENT LIVE WITH SALESFORCE, OUR NEW DATABASE, ON THURSDAY!

PYM has used Raiser's Edge (RE) database since 2000. It is difficult to use for those who are not deeply trained in it, the reports it can provide are limited and it can't easily be integrated with communications or program needs. Additionally the data has been entered into it in non-standard ways that actually prohibit us from extracting some of the information we want without significant time and brain-power. The data has been cleaned up and migrated to an instance of Salesforce that was created for our needs.

Following a week of training which all staff participated in to lesser and greater extents the database has been released fully into our care from the contractors who built it for us. We've found that we can not only access with incredible ease the data we've wanted to get our hands on, we also can see how much additional data was stored in RE that we couldn't even tell was there. We can prepare fundraising reports comparing giving levels year over year, year to date or between meetings with ease. Program and communications staff will soon be able to track event participation, participant satisfaction and level of interest in news and events. Each staff person can access the data they need on their own without relying on the busy schedule of someone else. Program, event, communications, and giving data can be combined to give us a clearer idea of where there is need and interest in what topics in the community. The next year will be one of gaining ease of use and transitioning communications and registration technologies from multiple separate programs to Salesforce.

Additionally, the \$65,000 cost for this database has been covered by individual donors, several meetings and two granting organizations. As a result we did not need to draw that funding down from our capital reserves.

A restriction by one of the donors asked that all who provided financial support for Salesforce be named as a way of lifting up the philanthropy within our community. Donors to this project include: Abington Meeting, Germantown Meeting, Haverford Meeting, London Grove Meeting, Moorestown Meeting, Newtown Meeting, Princeton Meeting, Jonathon Rhoads Trust, Shoemaker Trust, John Spears and Robert Taylor. We are hugely grateful to these Friends and Friends organizations for providing the financial support for a tool that provides so much support for the efficient functioning of our community.