

❖ GENERAL SECRETARY'S REPORT ❖
December 2003

The past six weeks has been a busy time. However, it has been busy with matters that are mostly either: (1) routine, (2) things about which you have heard reports through other channels, or (3) not of particular significance to this body. So, this will again be a brief report. My time over the last month has been absorbed by and divided between four areas of work — the tax case; the budget; activities related to planning, communication and fund raising activities; and routine administrative matters.

Please note: At the end of “my report” you will again find a brief compilation of “**What Else is Exciting.**” This is a brief summary things that other staff (and members) of PYM have been doing. The purpose of my work in administration and development (especially) is to make possible the kinds of valuable services, projects and events you read about there. So please look at it, and share it with Friends in your Meeting.

The Tax Case: Shepherding the tax case along continues to take up some of my time. Let me just say here that there is more encouraging news in this right now than I would have expected, which feels to me like confirmation of this body’s being well guided when it decided we should answer the Justice Department suit.

Work on the Budget: I worked with the other staff Directors and the key committee leaders to ensure we were as well prepared as possible for the Stewardship Conference on 11/15. Some 22 Meetings were represented there by 50 Friends in filling out the shape of our proposed 2004/05 budget. I want here to give the special thanks that are due to Jackie Bowers (Clerk of Financial Stewardship), Kathy Reilly, our Director of Finance, Standing Committee Clerks and the many members who did a remarkable job in preparation for that event. I also want to express deep appreciation for the generosity of Friends and Meetings who brought forth an increase of 7% in “covenant” funds to support that budget.

This was the most thoughtful and positive stewardship [budget] conference I have witnessed in my eight years here. There were thoughtful questions and comments, a general willingness to look more deeply at PYM’s priorities and Friends’ patterns of giving, and a clearer sense of responsibility for the future of this organization than I’ve ever heard expressed before. To all those who made the time and effort to communicate clearly and listen carefully to the concerns and information shared prior to that event, I am really grateful. A great deal of effort went into this conversation this year, and it was well spent.

Planning, Communications, Fund Raising: Aside from typical, day-to-day activities, in this realm the major focus of my work has been planning for the anticipated “PYM Sundays” in February. More than a third of our Meetings have now responded indicating they would welcome a visit from a team of PYM staff and committee members to talk about what PYM is and does, and hear how we can be more helpful to our Meetings and members. In a sort of continuing prelude to that I visited and spoke at three Meetings (Plumsted, Princeton and Radnor) and one of our retirement centers (Pennswood).

In addition to these efforts, I continue to work with planning for the Annual Sessions, and planning for the future of Arch Street Meeting House (which I described in my last report). Also, I continue to work with the group trying raise the money to renovate the Ramallah Meeting House, and hope to see that effort completed soon.

Professional Development: In addition to the matters mentioned above, and the routine administration that is part of my job, I have given some time this past month to several professional development opportunities. Occasionally Friends comment on how helpful it is when I can set things in a broader perspective, talk about how the issues we are wrestling with are handled in other religious and/or nonprofit organizations, or suggest other resources that might be available to us to help solve a problem. My capacity to do that rests partly on the background I brought to this work. However, it also requires that I continue to make the effort to read and expose myself to experiences and conversations that keep me up-to-date and broaden my perspective on what is going on in religion and religious organizations, in nonprofit management, and in policy discussions that are relevant to my work here. So, this last month I attended two conferences on religion and social policy, and another on nonprofit organizations. I found, as always, that the learning I've garnered has been very interesting, and (I'm sure) will be useful here.

Let me now close here by giving you the fuller update on the tax case, and encouraging you to read this month's version of "*What Else is Exciting,*" which follows below

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What's Exciting in PYM?

A Sample from Last Month

" **Workshop for Meeting Librarians:** Librarians and helpers from 22 monthly meeting libraries attended a retreat/conference at Willistown Friends Meeting on Saturday, October 25. Rebecca Mays led an inspirational session in the morning, opening Friends to new awareness of books as a medium of ministry. Rita Varley led the afternoon session, a focus group to learn what the meeting librarians need from PYM to help them in this ministry. Some items on their wish list are: (a) To have the meeting library collections on-line beside PYM Library holdings; (b) Help with cataloging their books; (c) A list serve where the librarians can network with each other as well as with PYM library staff; and (d) A strong central library where they can find what they need without having to have all of it on their shelves all the time. At the end of the day, the meeting librarians took close to 600 books home to their meeting libraries. Rita Varley, PYM Librarian, can be reached at 215-241-7219 or ritav@pym.org.

" **Parents and First Day School Teachers Gather at Gwynedd Meeting:** Fifty parents, religious educators and workshop leaders representing more than 20 Meetings attended Planting Seeds, Growing Spirit," a Parent/Teacher Religious Education Training Day at Gwynedd Meeting in November. Eight workshops and several breakout sessions provided Friends with an opportunity to explore ways to grow, coordinate and sustain stronger First Day Schools, as well as provide tools for educating our children in the manner of Friends both at home and within the Meeting community. Many attenders were deeply moved by the spiritual community of the day, and they felt better equipped to return to their homes and Meetings with both concrete ideas as well as inspired creativity for taking next steps. For information on upcoming Religious Education Department conferences, log onto our webpage or contact Helen Fields, Children's RE Programs Coordinator at 215-241-7008 or helenfields@pym.org.

" **New Visitation Program in Burlington Quarter:** With support from their Regional Coordinator and regional program oversight committee, Burlington Quarterly has launched a new visitation program. Two persons from each meeting come together to visit a different Meeting each month. This is generating such interest that some families and children are coming along. This is increasing awareness of and building relationships between different Meetings in the Quarter, and strengthening all Meetings. In the end, all Meetings are expected to benefit from learning about practices and activities in other Meetings, and smaller Meeting (in particular) are strengthened.

" **Workshop on "Painting in the Light" Enlivens Salem Quarter:** Salem Quarterly held a workshop entitled "Painting in the Light" in November. The workshop delighted the group who gathered the Annex at Salem Monthly Meeting. Six meetings were represented, forging or strengthening connections across the Monthly Meetings to help build a greater Quaker community. Participants created art while learning a new way to become more sensitive to the Spirit. The facilitator, Dana Gayner of Salem Monthly Meeting, introduced the day with discussion of the different ways people experience the world and the Divine in it, then led the group in a hands-on experience to stretch their souls. This was all made possible by the work of the Salem Quarter Coordination and volunteers who organized the event.