

# Pastoral Care *Newsletter*

**FINAL EDITION!**  
**Reflections on nearly**  
**two decades of publication.**

*For Member Care Committees,  
Ministry and Counsel, Overseers,  
and others who provide pastoral care  
in unprogrammed Friends' meetings.*

Volume 19, No. 4 June 2012

## **PCN: Looking back and moving forward**

**by Patricia McBee**  
**former PCN editor**

### **Pastoral Care Newsletter, 1993-2012:**

Nineteen years of service to Friends within Philadelphia Yearly Meeting and beyond comes to a close with this issue of *Pastoral Care Newsletter*. I had the privilege of editing *PCN* for eight of those nineteen years. Seventy-six times, this six-page newsletter has brought fresh insights to Quaker meetings, spreading from its origins in Philadelphia Yearly Meeting and reaching throughout the US, to Canada, Britain, Australia, and New Zealand.

The first ten years of articles were compiled into a book titled, *Grounded in God: Care and Nurture in Friends Meetings*. That collection of articles has been used as a text by the Earlham School of Religion and was referred to by one yearly meeting general secretary as "a first-aid kit for meetings."

*PCN* began with the insight and energy of Arlene Kelly who had worked for many years supporting meetings in their pastoral care work. The concept was simple: invite experienced pastoral caregivers to share their experiences with others.

As Arlene said in the first issue, "It is our hope that this newsletter may stimulate discussion in

meetings on the issue of pastoral care and that you will seek ways to share the fruits of those discussions by submitting your ideas for inclusion in future issues of this newsletter."

The newsletter recognized from the outset that most of us who do pastoral care in our meetings have no professional preparation for this role. We come to the work with a willingness to serve and a desire to help our meetings to be loving and inclusive communities. The pages of *PCN* have allowed us to sit with other Friends and learn from their experience. When our meetings hit a thorny issue for the first time we could turn to the pages of *PCN* and find that another meeting had been there before us and could help us find our way.

In the first half-dozen years *PCN* covered the major issues addressed by pastoral caregiving committees: membership, marriage, community.

The *PCN* committee often asked itself even then, "Should we lay down *PCN*? Is there anything left to write about?"

But the Spirit continued to present concerns to lift up for meetings: addressing race in our meetings, supporting people with mental illness, taking a contemporary look at the role of the elder, examining the strains to the community when the meetinghouse needs major change, and, recently, strengthening our community's ability to work well



**Patricia McBee**

together in addressing our diverse understanding of environmental issues.

I want to recognize the faithful service of the *Pastoral Care Newsletter* committee. Susan Heath has been the clerk of that committee since its early beginnings. She modestly claims that she doesn't do anything important—just pull together agendas and minutes and keep us on task—but she has been the glue that has held the group together.

Carolyn Terrell served for many years until her death. Suzanne Day and Jean-Marie Barch have been stalwarts and Martha Morris of Southeastern Yearly Meeting, the new kid on the block, has brought energy to *PCN* for the past five years.

Some who served in earlier years were Harriet Heath, Frank Kuehner, Dona Garretson, and myself. At PYM, staffer Steve Gulick, ever amiable and cooperative, took on thorny administrative and production tasks for many years.

Arlene Kelly guided *PCN* for its first several years, though was never the official editor. Others with long service include Helene Pollock, 1993-1997, Patricia McBee 1997-2005, and Carol Suplee 2006-2012. Several editors and committee members wrote for *PCN* over the years, some of them several times. Deep appreciation goes out to everyone who contributed to this ministry.

Even though the *Pastoral Care Newsletter* is being laid down, the work of pastoral care goes on in our meetings. Fortunately, much of the advice in *PCN* is timeless, so keep your copies of *Grounded in God* (or order yours from Quaker Books) and keep your notebooks of *PCN* back issues at hand. Continue to find opportunities to discuss pastoral care in your meeting and with others in your yearly meeting.

God still has work for us to do.

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## Writers Exemplify Faith in Action on Many Levels

by **Carol J. Suplee**  
**Editor, Pastoral Care Newsletter**

I was a relatively new Quaker, having recently joined the Medford (NJ) Friends Meeting when I became the editor of PYM's *Pastoral Care Newsletter* more than six years ago. True, I had been part of a Quaker "fringe element" for many years. Several family members and (I discovered recently) ancestors have been Quakers, so I felt on familiar ground.

To understand the mission of the newsletter, I turned to the archives.

I was impressed by the depth and breadth of the writing, by the diversity of subject matter and by the abiding faith expressed in every issue. The sensitive nature of pastoral care—caring for the spiritual life of the meeting community—necessarily must be concerned with temporal matters, the human issues that evoke the need for spiritual guidance.



**Carol J. Suplee**

My background in journalism and publications management did prepare me for the technical aspects of the newsletter, but I still had more to learn. More than my "bosses," my editorial committee members have been friends who helped me be a better Friend.

Working with *PCN*'s diverse writers (I count about 75) contributed in large measure to my own spiritual growth. Arlene Kelly, founder and first editor of *PCN*, whose writing on the Ministry of Pastoral Care, struck a welcome chord

among new readers and old when we republished her updated article from the very first issue. She wrote about how to approach members who may need help, but who avoid reaching out.

Along with traditional issues and common concerns, *PCN* tried to explore new territory. We considered the problem of a "Lightness Deficiency" as defined by writer/musician Jacob

*(continued on page 4)*

## PCN Founder Reflects on Newsletter's Mission

*"We had the impulse to share the newsletter as a resource in various contexts, venues, conferences and gatherings,"*

*—Arlene Kelly*

After having conducted conferences in Philadelphia for pastoral care givers in PYM's monthly meetings, Arlene Kelly wanted to find a way of nurturing pastoral care givers on a wider scale. While conferences did bring many caregivers together in the city, PYM's broad geographical area (across four states and many miles) was challenging.

So it seemed that in addition to bringing caregivers to Philadelphia, perhaps these resources could also be disseminated outward to the meetings on a regular basis. This allowed for more people in the same meeting to advantage of a common resource. Out of this concern, the Pastoral Care Newsletter (PCN) was conceived.

Arlene and others envisioned PCN as a practical, hands-on resource. "We wanted to create a newsletter that could be saved in a notebook, and used as a collective resource by caregivers," Arlene explained.

The basic format was simple. The issues would feature lead articles written by experienced and knowledgeable Friends working "on the ground" to address the wide range of matters that were challenging meetings. A sidebar, recounting a meeting's or a person's actual experience in that area of concern, would accompany each lead article. A set of queries by which meetings could examine their own needs and responses and a list of resources would complete the content.

Initial funding for the first year of



**Arlene Kelly**

publication was provided by a grant from the Shoemaker Fund. Thus, in the first year, editions could be provided to all PYM meetings without charge.

Arlene recalls spending most of the first year as editor, with Helene Pollock volunteering to take over the formatting and a myriad of other relevant tasks. The Family Relations Committee was actively involved in the launch and PYM staffer Steve Gulick later carried out the tasks of production, subscriptions

and distribution.

"We encouraged pastoral care committees to take enough subscriptions so that each member would have one – rather than rotating one copy among its members," Arlene said. "Many meetings have done this."

In her own work as a therapist (she is now retired), Arlene said she often tried to imagine what questions might be troubling people. In turn, she held what she calls "impromptu role play," encouraging people to articulate sensitive ways of responding. Her leadership, her writings for PCN and her service to pastoral caregivers reflect those skills and insight.

As the newsletter is gently and lovingly laid down, Arlene, in looking back across almost two decades of publication, is pleased that PCN has remained faithful to its mission. And she notes that the need to nurture caregivers remains constant as Friends look to the future.

—CJS

Stone. Jacob and his wife Greta are founders of the Quaker band, "Faith and Practice," whose mission has been to encourage "Light-ness" by gently poking fun at some of Friends' cherished foibles. Thanks to Pulitzer Prize winning cartoonist Signe Wilkinson for permission to use some of her wonderful Quaker-related cartoons in that issue.

With insight and gentleness, Rose Ketterer explored loneliness among Friends, a problem that often lingers beneath the surface. Kate Riel and Judy Owens wrote about sharing the work of the meeting, a topic that one reader called, "manna from heaven." Christie Duncan-Tessmer revealed new ideas and energy in an article about weaving children into the life of the meeting.

"Friends Coming Out" by Melody Brazo remains a helpful and insightful guide for meetings in caring for LGTB members. Carolyn Hilles did a stellar job in writing about hard times in "Keeping the North Star in View When Finances Turn South." We also looked deeply at hunger homelessness and reported what some meetings are doing to address those needs.

We are especially proud of Volume 18 plus the first in Volume 19 (September 2010, through September 2011). Within committee we called it "The Year of the Child." It began with a sparkling article by Norval Reece, "How to add Spirit, Spice and Kids to Your Meeting."

Thereafter followed equally lively, essential editions: Quaker parenting (Larue Evans and Harriet Heath), enfolding families and children (Beth Collea), Friends schools and care by meetings (Deborah Lyons) and Monique Begg's remarkable Friends Enrichment Program, bringing art, music, dance, literature, camping and other experiences to under-served children in the Moorestown (NJ) area.

We hope you enjoyed reading our Quaker camping issue as much as we enjoyed doing it. We focused on programs in three yearly meetings: Philadelphia, Baltimore and New England. Writers testified to the fact that Quaker-led camping historically has strengthened meetings and enhanced the spiritual life of campers as well

as staff across many generations.

Quaker Quest, the outreach program that has taken root across the country, occupied another issue and is still being used as a compact "tool kit" by meetings. Harry and Lois Forrest, original leaders of the team that brought Quaker Quest to PYM, were the principal writers.

For more than a year we pondered how to address environmental concerns in a practical/spiritual way. It took so long that one committee member feared we might have to publish "posthumously."

We finally produced a very satisfying and, we believe, useful issue led off by Patricia McBee, who had spearheaded the effort to make Friends Center a model of urban greening. The result has garnered national attention and awards. Two sidebars accompanied the lead article: one by California Friends Shelley Tanenbaum and Kathy Barnhart, another by PYM's Margaret Mansfield.

Space does not permit further musing, though I have hardly exhausted the list. But let's look now to the future.

**Will PYM's communication with and service to pastoral care givers end with the retirement of the printed version of Pastoral Care Newsletter?**

**Certainly not.**

There is a plan in the making. Beginning on page seven, Christie Duncan-Tessmer outlines how PYM will continue supporting pastoral caregivers. *The Pastoral Care Newsletter's* accumulated archive will remain a vital resource for that effort.

That's all very good news. Stay tuned!

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Dear readers,

*As the Pastoral Care Newsletter editorial committee thought deeply during this past year about laying down the newsletter, we started thinking about how other Quaker activities might be laid down. We felt we should continue our mission, even in our final issue, to serve pastoral caregivers .*

### **How do Friends discern whether to continue an activity or connection?**

*In this article, Susan Taylor and Martha Morris describe their yearly meeting's Spirit-led process of discernment and laying down. We hope you'll save this issue of PCN with all the others in your collection.*

*Carol Suplee, editor*

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## **Facing Difficult Decisions: Spirit-guided Patience, Listening, & Time Foster Unity**

**Susan Taylor  
with interviewer/author  
Martha Morris, SEYM**

“Why would you lay something down?” mused Susan Taylor, lifelong Friend and former clerk of Southeastern Yearly Meeting (SEYM) during a telephone interview.

“We ask: Do we as a meeting have the resources to fulfill the purpose of the activity?”

For example, if the meeting has less money for the activity, or fewer people are led to support and participate in it, perhaps the time is ripe for the meeting to reconsider its involvement. Laying down a nearly lifeless project may free time, energy and money for the leading of the Spirit to direct elsewhere. Sometimes it is clear to everyone that the purpose of a project, committee or other endeavor has been achieved and it is easy to lay it down.

In other circumstances, Susan noted, we ask, “Is there a conflict with our testimonies so that we feel we cannot continue as we have been?”

Susan, a long-time member of Tallahassee, FL, Monthly Meeting, was asked to reflect and share her knowledge on the SEYM process of deciding to lay down its membership in Friends United Meeting (FUM). The issue arose during her last year as assistant clerk of SEYM and continued for five of the six years she was SEYM clerk.

Each monthly or yearly meeting discerning whether to lay down an activity will have a unique experience. However, perhaps Susan's insights may

offer some ideas to other pastoral caregivers.

“In our particular case, a monthly meeting brought forward a concern about a policy of FUM.” They felt they could not in good conscience be a part of an organization practicing what they felt to be discrimination. This monthly meeting concern was brought to yearly meeting for discernment and the yearly meeting was led to take up the concern.

“It was a time of deep emotions, tension, and spiritual growth,” Susan said. Although many Friends did not agree with the policy, a number wanted to remain affiliated with FUM. While feelings ran high at times, many Friends were “deeply grounded in the Spirit and could still hear each other.”

### **How Did SEYM Reach Unity?**

Unity was achieved by staying grounded in God's love/the Spirit/ Christ Spirit/the Source/The Good/the Light; and reaching for help in staying there.

This was the most important dynamic. Susan explained that during the plenary sessions, participants spent an extended time in open worship prior to considering agenda items.

“The clerk read from yearly meeting epistles from around the globe that reflected our foundation as Quakers in God's guidance and brought encouragement in other ways,” she said. “We considered the concern in our monthly meetings and named an ad-hoc committee to gather all Friends into extended worship in

various locations between yearly meeting sessions.

“This lasted about two years. Visiting Friends held us in the Christ Spirit during our sessions and one provided eldership for the clerk. SEYM Friends held everyone and the process in Love.”

By attending clerking workshops given by two different Friends, observing other clerks and feeling the care of FUM visitors helped Susan as well.



**Susan Taylor**



**Martha Morris**

## **Seeking Patience:**

Taking the time to “just be present with one another, to feel our connections as human beings, to share what was in our hearts,” was useful, Susan pointed out. “We were all doing the best we could.” She observed that it was helpful for Friends to find time outside the business sessions to share very strong feelings.

“When emotions are overwhelming, they can interfere with the ability of the individual and the group to seek together. People need to have a place to have their feelings heard and valued outside of meeting for business. Of course, feelings will arise in a business meeting as well, and it is just as important to acknowledge and respect them there—listening for and affirming the truth they reflect.”

## **Allowing Time and Rest:**

The question was taken up during five years of business sessions. This provided time for seasoning and honoring the diversity of outlook on the issue. After one particularly long and exhausting gathering, the meeting united in a desire to set the matter aside as an agenda item for one year. The gathering in the “off” year was devoted to other matters of common business and to having fun together-experiencing the joy of the Spirit more tangibly as a yearly meeting and bringing renewal for our continuing discernment on the concern.

The time between annual gatherings was not empty, however. A dozen or more Friends met in “expectant waiting” to go deep in seeking guidance of the Spirit. All Friends were invited to join in these times of worship. The current clerk of SEYM convened that committee.

“It was important to take the time to consider this prayerfully, so that we could proceed with love,” Susan noted. “Love for ourselves within SEYM and love for FUM Friends. There were people everywhere feeling pain.”

Allowing time within the annual sessions was also helpful, Susan felt. During one yearly meeting, representatives of monthly meetings spent much of their free time meeting as a committee to seek God’s direction. Neither the committee nor the yearly meeting as a whole reached final unity that year, but the experience of seeking together deepened the quest.

## **Garnering Outside Support:**

“We needed to allow ourselves to seek help and support. I was learning more about clerking.” Susan related. “My intent was to have everyone’s voice heard. I see now that there are ways in which that could have happened without pre-empting workshops one year and going on until 11:30 p.m. on another night.

“For me it was a growing experience. I really needed to go way down into prayer between sessions.” Susan noted that support and guidance came from British Friends, Netherlands Friends, from Arthur Larrabee (Philadelphia Yearly Meeting clerk and frequent leader of workshops on clerking), from the clerking workshop led by Deborah Fisch (then clerk of Iowa Yearly Meeting, Conservative) and from the traveling ministries committee of Friends General Conference.

Maria Bradley, who served in an eldership role with the clerk in one session, supported the clerk’s need to stay in the Spirit while in the midst of chaos.

“As a woman who had internalized the desire to please others,” Susan said, “I had to accept

that the clerk's role is not to please people, but to remain rooted in the Source and go forward from there."

### **Spiritual Practice of All:**

Speaking for herself, Susan noted the usefulness of "steeping myself in my own spiritual practice, of taking the time to listen for the guidance of the Spirit."

Although some Friends were restive about the time taken to resolve this concern, Susan felt the time, including longer-than-usual periods of worship during business sessions, was well spent.

### **What Didn't Work Well:**

In Susan's view, trading e-mails on the concern did not allow for individuals to connect deeply and to grow. Face-to-face contacts were necessary for deep sharing and seeking. She further reflected that one year the yearly meeting reached unity that it would suspend its affiliation with FUM, and if no strong leading appeared to the contrary, would permanently disaffiliate the next time the matter was considered. At the time, the minute allowed the tired group to move on to other matters and activities by reaching a temporary resolution.

"We thought we had been in the Spirit, but we could see later that we were not when defining action for another year's meeting for worship with attention to business. The following year we had to write a new minute because one business session cannot predict how God will lead in the future. We were trying to force a resolution."

### **Finally Reaching Unity:**

Ultimately, SEYM did reach unity in laying down its affiliation with FUM. One member stood aside. The loving presence of SEYM Friends and of some FUM Friends, including then General Secretary Sylvia Graves, was critical to the transformation. Just as vital was the clear communication involved in having Friends, who wanted to remain affiliated with FUM and those who did not, be members of the ad hoc committee that prepared the final minute presented for approval in 2010.

In addition, a devoted SEYM Friend from

Palm Beach Meeting took us all along on her own transformation. As an observer to FUM board meetings and other activities, she found herself in agreement with some of their stands and not in unity with others. However, she faithfully found loving connections with FUM Friends. She has felt a leading to volunteer with FUM in Kenya, and most years spends weeks or months there. She, along with our support of her ministry, has been the embodiment of our love for FUM.

Susan concludes, "As part of deciding to lay down our affiliation with FUM, we realized that it would be too painful for the yearly meeting as a whole to maintain our affiliation. However, no one way defines what it means to be a Quaker. We remain, together, members of the Quaker family.

We are all children and friends of God. We can continue to relate deeply in ways that do not require a membership affiliation. When we had done the work of opening to the Christ Spirit as best we could, we felt a sense of ease, of peace. And of love for FUM."

Friends believe in continuing revelation. This is an account of how Friends worked and listened and loved to act on that belief.

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## *Coming Soon!*

### **PYM Will Launch New E-Newsletter,**

**by Christie Duncan-Tessmer**

Building on the foundation established when the *Pastoral Care Newsletter* was founded almost two decades ago, the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting will continue caring for and informing pastoral caregivers throughout the family of meetings. The method and the messages may vary and broaden, but the impetus is the same: to nurture caregivers with guidance, inspiration and knowledge as they fulfill the role that is at the heart of our Quaker faith.

A new vehicle, *PYM Pastoral Care Today (PCT)*,



**Christie Duncan-Tessmer**

an electronic (e-newsletter) for Friends with a concern for pastoral care, will debut in the Fall of 2012. This bi-monthly newsletter (five issues annually) will appear in odd-numbered months with the exception of July.

*PCT* is designed to support Friends with a calling for expressing the Divine through

care of members and attenders in our meetings. The newsletter will bring Friends together across meetings and allow us to share the work that we are engaged in, the wisdom among us and resources that support us.

Each issue will include three stories.

One story will feature "A Message from the Field" with information about something in Yearly Meeting of particular interest to Friends active in pastoral care. It could be a report on an event or a sharing about ongoing work; in any case, it will be about something that readers can replicate, join or use in some significant way.

The second story will be "A Reflection from Experience." This story will be written by a Friend who will share experience and wisdom from the field of pastoral care. It may be practical; it may be inspirational. It's a way of lifting up leadership, of sharing the light of others and of inspiring Friends.

The third story will feature a resource of use to Friends practicing pastoral care. It could be a website, a book, a tool, an article or a curriculum to share a few examples.

In addition, each issue will include a calendar and a "Bulletin Board." The calendar will list upcoming

events in the yearly meeting of interest to those caring for Friends. The bulletin board is a place for Friends to share reports with others about events or activities within their meetings and to share events and resources from outside our meetings.

*PYM Pastoral Care Today* will be free and open to subscription by anyone who is interested. It will initially be sent to all pastoral care contacts in Philadelphia Yearly Meeting. Subscribers to the current *Pastoral Care Newsletter* will be invited to subscribe as well. For more information, contact the newsletter at [pastoralcare@pym.org](mailto:pastoralcare@pym.org) or call George Schaefer at 215-241-7068.

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*Note: The writer is the PYM Associate Secretary for Program and Religious Life.*

### Resources

*Pastoral Care Newsletter*, back issues: Complete list of topics from the 19-year quarterly publication is available by contacting Jill Tafoya at [jillt@pym.org](mailto:jillt@pym.org) or 215-241-7211.

*Grounded In God, Care And Nurture In Friends Meetings*, Patrica McBee, editor covering ten years of the quarterly PCN Newsletter. Quaker Press of FGC 2002, [http://www.quakerbooks.org/grounded\\_in\\_god.php](http://www.quakerbooks.org/grounded_in_god.php)

Morley, Barry, *Beyond Consensus, Salvaging Sense of the Meeting*: "In seeking the sense of the meeting we open ourselves to being guided to perfect resolution in the Light..." Pendle Hill Pamphlet 1996 32 PP. Paper - Php 307 [http://www.quakerbooks.org/beyond\\_consensus.php](http://www.quakerbooks.org/beyond_consensus.php)

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