

## **Spiritual Formation Collaborative Report, 2023**

### **1. What do you want the PYM body (all 10,000 of us in PYM membership) to know about your collaborative?**

We want the body of PYM to know that the Spiritual Formation Collaborative (SFC) offers the opportunity for deepening the spiritual life of any group of Friends including within a Monthly Meeting/Quarter or several Meetings at once. We will come to any Meeting and will offer our program for a day, a weekend, or for the full nine-month traditional program. We hope to deepen individual spiritual lives and have a lasting spiritual effect on Meetings through our retreats, spiritual friendship/accountability groups and reading groups. We want Friends who participate in our programs to better understand how to help one another grow and thrive within a Meeting and to deepen their own spiritual practices. Our evaluations are a testimony to the effectiveness of this program for strengthening the spiritual life of everyone in the Meeting. They are available for viewing on our website. <https://www.pym.org/spiritual-formation-program-collaborative/> We offer a Summer Sessions and a Yearly Weekend Retreat experience which are open to everyone in PYM.

### **2. How does your group meet and how frequently?**

The entire collaborative meets every other month on Saturdays from 10-12 or 1 pm. We may call an additional meetings as needed. In 2022 we met 9 times. In addition, teams organizing specific events meet as many times as needed. For example, a team planning an SF program for a Meeting might have an introductory session with the Meeting, 4 planning sessions for the Meeting retreats, and then 2 weekends and a Saturday for the retreats themselves. Members take individual time preparing their pieces for the retreats/events. We also hold a weekend annual retreat in August for the Collaborative itself for spiritual refreshment, renewal and long-range planning.

### **3. How is the work of the collaborative being shared with the PYM community?**

We offer the 9-month Spiritual Formation Program, weekend programs, or day long programs to any Meeting in PYM that requests our programs. We offer a retreat at summer sessions and a yearly weekend retreat currently being held at Pendle Hill to the entire body of PYM. We maintain a website sharing information on our programs, all our materials and designs, as well as a calendar for our upcoming programs. This link gives a 3-minute video that is a nice overview of our programs. <https://www.pym.org/spiritual-formation-program-collaborative/> We rely on PYM staff to provide PR for summer session and our annual weekend retreat.

### **4. How does your collaborative remain spiritually grounded through its work?**

The first hour of all of our meetings is used as a check-in spiritually. If a member requests it-- we hold that member in the light. Team meetings also begin and end with prayer. And before a program begins team members meet and pray for an hour before the program, pray throughout the program and times are scheduled for Worship during the program. It is also our custom for each facilitator to be paired with an elder, who holds both the facilitator and the group being facilitated In the Light.

When we hold retreats, if we are not facilitating, members will often participate in the activities either with other SF members or participants if appropriate. Spirit and the audience always teach us and guide us during retreats. We continually learn new things and have the Spirit confirmed.

Once per year our collaborative holds a retreat for members when we renew, refresh and examine our work. We pray for one another and support one another in our lives and in our SFC work.

### **5. What are the major accomplishments for the year?**

The Spiritual Formation Summer Session Retreat on July 26-27, 2022 embraced the Yearly Meeting theme of "Across the Generations," by inviting Clinton Pettus to present his thoughts on racism through the generations.

Clinton looked at generations as different periods in our history. He started by asking us to reflect on Part Two of the book, Caste: The Origins of our Discontents (2020) where Isabel Wilkerson talks about the American caste system with "...those at the top, European Americans, who have been its primary beneficiaries, and those at the bottom, African-American, against whom the caste system has directed its full powers of dehumanization."

The retreat also explored what Clinton refers to as the "Equal Rights Generation," "The Anti-Racism Generation," and the "The Mindlessness Generation." Finally, he called upon us to give birth to a new generation or to "Prospect a New Generation." Prospecting encourages us to focus less on who we think we were or are and be more intentional in thinking about and living out who we want to become "across generations." His presentation was powerful and thought provoking.

### **Yearly Annual Retreat: Spiritual Companion Groups at Pendle Hill on October 14-16, 2022**

The Spiritual Formation Program invited the Spiritual Companions Group to offer their workshop at the annual weekend retreat at Pendle Hill, on October 14-16, 2022. The goal was to spiritually enrich anyone who attended, to act as refreshment for already existing Spiritual Formation friendship/accountability groups and offer the option to form a spiritual companion group if desired.

Spiritual Companion Groups are small groups of 2-4 people who are each committed to experimenting with the Living Spirit in their lives. They each experiment with allowing the Spirit to guide and shape their daily life and record that experiment in a journal or notebook.

Companion Groups meet regularly to exchange attention and witness how differently this experiment manifests in each person's life. Tests of discernment include writing the insight or practice, saying it to others, hearing it reflected back in another's voice, and responding to others' feedback. Companions attend to what has arisen in an individual, which then reveals what is true for the group.

At the end of the retreat Friends chose whether they wanted to form a companion group with other participants, or others in their Meeting or spiritual life. Friends had the option to choose or not to choose, to form Companion group and simply let the retreat refresh them.

### **Wrote article on 2022 Retreat**

Jane Cadwallader wrote an article Yearly Annual Retreat/ Spiritual Companion Groups at Pendle Hill on October 14-16, 2022.

### **Updated our Reading List for the Nine-Month Program**

The collaborative divided into pairs and each pair took a section of the reading list and recommended deletions and additions. We added queries to the list. The goal was to make the number of readings more doable for our participants.

### **PR: Creation of a video and updating the SF brochure**

We are grateful to Wendy Kane for helping us create a virtual video describing the Spiritual Formation Program and updated our brochure which is both electric and physical. The link for the video is listed above in question #3.

### **6. What are the things that are stopping/hindering your mission, if any?**

New members. We need help recruiting younger members for SF. Anyone below 70 would do.

### **Need to Improve the registration and recruitment for our yearly weekend retreat**

First of all, we would like to thank PYM staff for their work and support of our program. They have been wonderful. We would like to make a few suggestions to improve our work and need PYM staff to assist us in making these improvements.

Every year it is difficult to get registration for our yearly weekend retreat on the PYM website in advance enough, to give us time to recruit a fair-sized audience. Online registration is often ready 1-2 months before the program. We would like it up 6-8 months before the program so that when we recruit throughout the year, we can give possible participants the registration link.

Currently one post card is sent to each meeting clerk and clerk of worship and ministry 1-2 months before the program. We would like additional recruitment efforts and approaches earlier. For example, at 3 months before the retreat and 6 months before the retreat.

We realize PYM staff needs specific information from us in order to make these changes and suggest we agree on a mutual timeline so PYM staff can do this advance work. We hope this can improve the number of people benefiting from our program.

It would be great if the travel reimbursement form was sent to clerks of collaboratives on a yearly basis and for it to be listed on the PYM website so members are more likely to submit expenses.

**7. Would you like additional support from PYM staff, the Quaker Life Council Clerk, your Program Committee liaison, or the Program Committee?**

The PYM staff and program committee have been very supportive of us and help make our work possible. I would like to give our heartfelt thanks to Olivia Brangan, and Wendy Kane. We thank Wendy Kane for our new video and Olivia for the many tasks she has performed for us for our yearly retreat.