

Youth Ministries Report
Executive Committee, April 2006

*“The same Spirit that lifted up the Valiant Sixty and
Lucretia Mott is not yet finished with us.”*

This ministry was shared by a member of the Philadelphia Adult Young Friends group as they and the newly born Youth Ministry Committee met on a recent snowy evening in Philadelphia. The Philadelphia Friends shared their journey of building a community of young adult Quakers who regularly gather for fellowship and worship. We all shared our visions of a Religious Society of Friends that embraces the Divine leadings, Spirit-led ministries, and faith and action witnesses of all its members.

As the Youth Ministry Committee met in Philadelphia the snowy weekend of February 10-12, we were keenly aware of the youth ministry work that the Spirit is calling us to do. The needs, the opportunities, and the potential have been clearly expressed and heard by many Friends. The enthusiasm for this work, from Friends of all ages, has been clear and powerful. The work before the Youth Ministries Committee that weekend was to discern, prioritize and map our way forward.

We entered into our work carrying tenderly the many deep concerns that had been given us. We knew that the rush of enthusiasm, transforming potential and radical visions would need to settle side by side with the reality of available time, energy and resources. We sought to respect the unfolding of priorities, knowing that the work will be done as it can and should. We carefully considered of all elements of youth ministry work that have come to us from the Youth Ministry Discernment Committee, from the Young Adult Consultation in March 2005, and from discussions with Friends at FGC Gathering, Central Committee, FGC Committees, Yearly Meetings, Monthly Meetings and in individual conversations. We then began to lift up priorities.

We saw our work fall into three broad areas: (1) traveling ministries, (2) conferences and events, and (3) communications and resources. Within those broad areas, 1½ year and 3½ priorities were identified.

Traveling Ministries

Two pieces to this work were part of the 1½ year priorities. The first was the need for some members of this committee to travel under this concern; meeting with youth, being a listening presence and hearing what young people have to say. This will more authentically inform our work.

The second piece was explore with the Traveling Ministries Program how the committees can work together to find, support and nurture young adult nascent ministers. Members of TMP have agreed to attend our next meeting June 2-4 to explore this.

Longer-term priorities include:

- Workshop at the Gathering (2007-2008) about traveling ministries
- Working to develop models for intervisitation; possible curriculum for workshops

- Gathering, documenting, and making available profiles of “models that work” from other FGC Quaker groups

Conferences and Events

We identified two conferences that we would like to work on in the next couple of years. First, we were enthusiastic about the opportunity to join with Committee for Ministry on Racism and possibly others to plan a small conference in spring of 2008 that would focus on the spiritual needs of our youth and addressing a need for supporting or creating opportunities for transformative religious experiences. Secondly, we would like to move forward with a proposal for a modified two-track Young Quakes conference for Fall '07. This conference would incorporate the Young Quakes focus of gathering young Friends to explore the theological diversity among Friends with a second focus of gathering Youth Workers to support the networking, sharing, and spiritual renewal needs of these Friends. We are eager to learn from the Religious Education Committee about their experience running the Young Quakes Conference

Communications and Resources

The 1-½ year priorities of this area include communicating the work and vision of the Youth Ministries Committee via written articles. An article has appeared in the Winter 2006 issue of FGC Connections. Further communications are planned for the October issue of Friends Journal and the FGC fall mailing to Monthly Meetings. The committee also plans to have a information clearinghouse website launched by July 2006 which will (eventually) include written materials already available; events/conferences; internships/service opportunities; a blog/discussion page; information on best practices with regards to Youth Ministries events and programming; and links to other Quaker organizations. Finally, the committee will host an informational session/interest group at the July 2006 Gathering.

Longer-term priorities include identifying needs and creating new materials and resources, exploring the possibility of an FGC internship, and ongoing consideration of how we best communicate with other groups all of what is happening in this work, especially how we reach the disenfranchised and those who are not currently involved in their meetings

Additional Resources

While the committee labored faithfully to discern priorities, we did end up identifying a large body of work as “priority” work. We felt that these were the pieces critical to moving forward. We are aware that the development of a website, coordinating or sharing coordination for two conferences, developing a traveling ministries initiative aimed at identifying and supporting young nascent ministers, and being out in the wider community enough to be able to listen and more fully discern the outlines of our work will entail substantial effort. The list is daunting. It is the Youth Ministry Committee’s sense that we would need a full-time staff coordinator in FY '07 in order to respond to these outlined needs and opportunities.

The first Youth Ministries Committee meeting was joyful, forward looking and exciting. The work is uplifting and we feel a great surge of spirit as those who have been doing this work for a long time are joined by others new to this concern. We are buoyed by a vision of building a community of ministers that is more diverse, inclusive, and united by God.

Respectfully submitted, Robin Greenler