

Pullman-Moscow Monthly Meeting continues to be a small but mighty meeting. We meet over Zoom on First Days, but we were able to gather in person for a holiday celebration in December. We continue to care for each other both spiritually and occasionally with practical needs.

We have no plans to resume meeting regularly in person. Many of us still find it difficult to center and to feel the presence of the Spirit in a gathered meeting during online worship. However, members of the Meeting are spread out over more than 40 miles, and we would find it hard to justify the time, expense, and fossil fuel usage required to meet in person every week. Meeting online also has the advantages of allowing Friends temporarily or permanently far away to join us. By being on Zoom we experience the blessed presence of others as far away as New England. We may be meeting online more or less permanently, only gathering in person on special occasions.

A continuing strength of our meeting is our care and support for each other. We seek to be there for people who are in need. Meeting for worship provides a stable and caring space for many of us each week.

One Friend shared an image of our Meeting as a bright half moon, collected into a single circular whole shining both light and darkness. We draw strength from our diversity of backgrounds and viewpoints together with our shared Quaker process and experience and our commitment to nurturing our individual and collective spiritual growth.

ADDENDUM: REPORT TO P&SC, AS REQUESTED

Following NPYM's 2021 Annual Session we saw the need to collectively learn about the history of the Nimiipuu (Nez Perce) and Palouse peoples who were the original inhabitants of the region where we now live. We minuted our commitment to do that and called it our Awareness Project. Later we expanded the project to include learning about Quaker involvement in the history of the Indigenous peoples of the Northwest.

On Feb 1, 2022, we received the draft Minute of Support for Indigenous People put forward by the Anti-Racism Working Group (ARWG) with a request that we consider it and report back to them "before Feb 20 and April 30."

While we support the objective of this proposed minute, we had severe concerns about its wording. There are two paragraphs followed by some action items and resources. Are the action items intended as an integral part of the minute, or as accompanying suggested actions for meetings, worship groups and individuals?

If the action items are not part of the minute, then the first two paragraphs are only hot air to make us feel good for passing it. But if the action items are an integral part of the minute, then the minute is in flagrant violation of good Quaker process! In the latter case it sets a dangerous precedent for NPYM!

The action items dictated to local meetings and worship groups to take a number of specific actions. However, NPYM has *no* authority to dictate anything to the local meetings and worship groups. Its purpose is to support its constituent groups, not to lead them from “top down”.

We labored diligently with ARWG about the wording of the proposed minute and the process underlying it. We felt ARWG’s urgency to pass the minute at NPYM’s 2022 Annual Session was “committee led” rather than being Spirit led. By June we felt singled out by the committee, as the only Meeting standing in the way of the minute. We also felt bullied by at least one committee member.

Finally, in July (nearly the eve of the Annual Session) ARWG agreed to add the words “as led” to the heading of the list of mandated actions, giving meetings and worship groups a way to ignore any of the listed actions that they were not Spirit led to do already. It felt to us like a secular compromise on the part of ARWG, but at least it gave lip service to following the leading of Spirit.

When the minute was brought forward for approval at the 2022 Annual Session, our Meeting Clerk stood to say that Pullman-Moscow Monthly Meeting could not approve it, but would stand aside rather than actively try to block it as we had been prepared to do, until the words “as led” were added.

The final action point calls for meetings to include their progress related to “NPYM Minutes” (more minutes than just this one?) in our annual State of Society reports and/or to ARWG, etc. This year we have done that, but in the future we think a separate report directly to the Peace and Social Concerns Committee is more appropriate.

We have heard that ARWG is requesting a change to Faith and Practice to include reporting these progress reports in each meeting’s State of Society report. This is an example of their leading NPYM on a slippery slope toward becoming a conventional top down secular organization. F&P is a description of our current practices and should not become a prescription for what those practices should include.

Meanwhile, this process took so much of our collective energy that our own Awareness Project died from our neglect. By September we recovered enough energy to resurrect our Awareness Project to explore local sacred spaces and traditions and meet with local natives.

In a larger Meeting, such work might have fallen to a committee of those Friends most concerned; in our small Meeting this work involved the entire Meeting. Friends noted how this work brought us together, as well as how it gave us a deeper understanding of Quaker process: its strengths and accompanying frustrations.