

Personal Aid Committee Annual Report for 2017

We must be concerned about the welfare of every member of the Meeting community. While Friends need to guard against prying or invasion of privacy, it is nevertheless essential that Meetings be aware of the spiritual and material needs of members of the community and express caring concern in appropriate ways. – Faith and Practice, BYM

Committee members: Steve Brooks, Pam Callard, Tom Libbert, Mary Melchior, Lydia Pecker, Emilie Schmeidler

The Personal Aid Committee (PAC) is asked by the Meeting to provide caring concern through practical assistance to meet short-term needs of members and attenders, e.g. transportation, shopping, or meals for those who are injured or ill; compassionate support; limited financial assistance; and by making contact with community members we have not seen for a while. In the process, we listen, identify resources, visit, make telephone calls, track down absent friends and family, and serve on support groups.

PAC meets monthly to review new or ongoing needs of FMW community members who have sought the Committee's help or been referred by others. These deliberations are confidential; we strive to maintain the privacy of Friends while responding to their needs. PAC also plans special assistance and public education projects, and addresses other concerns brought to our attention.

Two years ago we picked up an earlier custom of having cards to sign or to write a little note to FMW community members who are celebrating a life event, or who are ill or suffering a loss. In 2017 we sent out over seventy-five cards. We also offer to hold in the Light anyone who requests it for whatever reason.

PAC works with the Hunger and Homelessness Taskforce to try to address needs of people connected to the Meeting who are homeless (or in danger of becoming homeless). We also developed links with people in Meeting who have extensive experience with social service agencies that may be able to help with financial, mental health, or other needs. This year we were especially concerned about the welfare of two people. One is settled, at least for the time being, and continues his loose relationship to the Meeting. The other, a regular attender, continues to live in a shelter.

Beyond providing short-term personal assistance to individuals, the Committee administers two scholarships to enrich the spiritual life of individuals and contribute to the Meeting's corporate life.

BYM provides each monthly meeting with certificates to encourage those who have not attended the Annual Session to go by providing two days free. In 2017, we distributed certificates for three adults and one child. In addition, PAC gave small scholarships to enable one friend to attend FGC Gathering and another to attend the FCNL Annual Meeting.

PAC continues to work with Ministry and Worship Committee and Healing and Reconciliation Committee on issues of Pastoral Counseling and Community Building. In 2016 and 2017, this working group sponsored a series of workshops. For 2018, the group has organized a reading and discussion of the book, *Out of the silence: Quaker Perspectives on Pastoral Care and Counseling*.

During 2017, PAC sponsored “Silence and Solidarity” an interfaith memorial gathering for people who have lost a child. PAC also sponsored several “Active Bystander” trainings at FMW and in Texas.

PAC relies on members of the Meeting community beyond its formal membership. We rely on the invaluable informal assistance of past members, especially past clerks. Debby Churchman, as Administrative Secretary, helps us in a multitude of ways, especially alerting us to FMW members and attenders in need. For years, sale from Bob Meehan’s Treasure Bread has provided the funds for the Personal Aid budget. The Committee is tremendously grateful to Bob for this long standing and significant contributions to the welfare of our community!

Respectfully submitted,
Emilie Schmeidler, clerk