**Personal Aid Committee’s Annual Report for 2015**

*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*

The Personal Aid Committee meets monthly to review new or ongoing needs of FMW community members who have sought the Committee’s help or been referred by others, plan special assistance and public education projects, and address other concerns brought to our attention. Its deliberations are confidential, and we strive to maintain the privacy of Friends while responding to their needs. 

**Current Committee Members:**  Steve Brooks, Pam Callard, Tom Libbert, Patty Murphy, Lydia Pecker, and Emilie Schmeidler (Clerk); during 2015, Alex Matthews and Malachy McBride also served on the committee.

 The Personal Aid Committee 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 contacting community members we have not seen for a while. In the process, we listen, identify expert resources, visit, make telephone calls, track down absent friends and family, and serve on support groups. This year we also picked up an earlier custom of having cards to sign or to write a little note to members of the FMW community who are ill, suffering a loss, or celebrating a life even such as a baby or marriage; and offering to hold in the Light anyone who requests it for whatever reason.

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.

         FMW scholarships – Several years ago the Meeting for Worship with a Concern for Business approved the Finance and Stewardship Committee’s proposal to establish a small scholarship fund, and assigned responsibility to the Personal Aid Committee. This year PAC awarded two scholarships to two young adult Friends to attend conferences at Pendle Hill, one to attend the Young Adult Friends Conference retreat in the spring; the other to attend the “Beyond Diversity” conference in the fall.

         BYM certificates – BYM provides each monthly meeting with certificates to encourage those who have not attended the Annual Session to go by proving two days free. Four BYM certificates were issued in 2015.

Traditionally, PAC responsibilities been defined in terms of short-term needs. This year, the committee has struggled to find ways to respond to longer-term needs of members and attenders.

         We’ve responded to several people are homeless (or in danger of becoming homeless), and have financial, mental health, and other needs. PAC has worked with members of the Hunger and Homelessness Taskforce to try to address these needs. We also developed links with people in Meeting who have extensive experience with social service agencies; they help us link to agencies that may be able to help people with housing, financial, mental health, or other needs.

         In the course of keeping in touch with long-term community members we have not seen for a while, sometimes they tell us that they want to stay in contact with FMW, but find that increasingly difficult or impossible. PAC is limited in the amount of assistance it can offer. Fortunately, in several instances PAC has been able to find people to respond: members of the person’s spiritual formations or “friendly eights” group, people living in the vicinity, etc. But much of this need in FMW remains unmet.

Currently, there is no committee that FMW has asked to take on responsibility for meeting these longer-term needs. The Meeting as a whole needs to consider what relationship it wants to have to members of the community. The issue is urgent because our meeting is large, diverse, and spread throughout the metropolitan area; many members have demanding responsibilities that limit their availability. At the same time, as some long-term members age and are no longer able to serve the community in ways they have previously, they find themselves in need of assistance if they are to remain part of the meeting community

Just as the personal needs of FMW community members are far greater than one small committee can meet, PAC relies on members of the Meeting community beyond its formal membership. 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 longstanding and significant contributions to the welfare of our community! We rely on the invaluable informal assistance of past members, especially past clerks Jim Steen, Marcia Reecer, Merry Pearlstein, and Janet Dinsmore. Debby Churchman, as Administrative Secretary, helps us in a multitude of ways, especially in identifying and reaching out to FMW members and attenders in need.

We also depend heavily on non-Committee members who help us respond to individuals in need. We are looking for volunteers to help with occasional services, e.g. transporting members to Meeting and medical appointment, phoning or visiting isolated Friends, and making and delivering meals. Please let the Committee know if you could provide this type of assistance. A volunteer form is available on the FMW website under “Personal Aid Committee/Personal Aid” that describes in greater detail possible volunteer services. If anyone is considering joining Personal Aid, please get in touch with any of the current or past members, or with the Nominating Committee.

Respectfully submitted,

Emilie Schmeidler, clerk