As it is, there are many parts, but one body. The eye cannot say to the hand, "I don't need you!" And the head cannot say to the feet, "I don't need you!" so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other.

1 Corinthians 12

The year has been a rich time for Ministry & Counsel. In the late summer of 2020, the committee launched the Spiritual Sharing Small Groups program (SSSG). A second round of small groups will be finishing soon and, if Way is open, a third round will begin. The SSSG program continues to be shepherded by Cheryl Sutton (Bear Creek), Lorene Ludy (Lincoln), and Deborah Fink (Ames).

In Fifth Month, M&C reflected together on the metaphor of addressing racism and whiteness as a journey that we are on, individually and as a body. This was in part due to Midyear Meeting’s theme and Friends’ engagement with it. There are challenges and helpers on the journey when we run into difficulty so we don’t have to travel alone, and there are resources available to us to learn more.

We read together the State of the Meeting reports and were struck by how heartfelt and thoughtful many of these are. A number of meetings have been enriched by having a wider reach to and greater inclusiveness of Friends, as well as easy intervisitation across our meetings due to the access that Zoom provides. We also noted concerns held by some meetings about how to engage in more effective outreach and how to provide and sustain inclusive worship as we emerge from the pandemic. We hope some of what is offered in these reports will provide guidance. We return these reports to the yearly meeting clerk with the recommendation that, if Way is open, they be read during annual sessions.

We received the Religious Education reports, and we include a summary here. Because Friends appreciate learning of resources that our meetings used, we include those as well:

**RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

Six religious education reports were received. Only one Meeting out of twelve continued their First Day School during the year on Zoom, providing activities for the elementary and middle school children, with one group on First Days after worship and the other on weekday evenings.

The older children from the meeting explored the Quaker testimonies and other faith traditions. Together they wrote a play about the Children’s Meeting of 1663 when the adults were imprisoned. The play was presented on Zoom to the Meeting, including costumes, background scenery, and music. It was well done, enjoyed and appreciated.

Meetings also reported on adult religious education activities. Adult religious education took the form of book discussions, spiritual formation groups, query discussions, and invited speakers. Friends deepened their understanding of Quaker history and ways to grow in their spiritual journey. Topics also focused on the rights of indigenous people,
immigrants and racial justice. All of this was made possible through the use of technology.

Resources mentioned: Articles from Friends Journal; QuakerSpeak videos; webinars from National Native American Boarding School Healing Coalition; epistles from the website of Friends World Committee for Consultation; Quaker workshops held over Zoom; the Sparklers curriculum for children in First Day School; and a number of books: Nothing Lowly in the Universe; To Be Broken and Tender: A Quaker Theology for Today; The Quakers, 1656-1723 (Rosemary Moore’s chapters); and Turning to One Another: Simple Conversations to Restore Hope to the Future.

Related to the youngest among us in the yearly meeting, in 2019, M&C recommended that a document for safety guidelines for children and youth during IYMC functions be posted on the IYMC website. Friends wanted to have time to review the document, with the intention to reconsider M&C’s recommendation in 2020. The pandemic prevented us from attending to that follow-up work. The yearly meeting clerk and the M&C clerk will work together to send a reminder for meetings to review the document in preparation for 2022.

Delayed a year by the pandemic, M&C has received a report this year from Deborah Fisch (Paullina) about her experiences of responding to the call from the Spirit to travel in the ministry. Her anchor committee also shared a report, and a new travel minute from Paullina Meeting has been received. In Friends tradition, when a monthly meeting tests and records that a Friend is being called to travel in the ministry beyond the yearly meeting, the monthly meeting’s travel minute is brought to the YM’s M&C for consideration. M&C unites with the discernment of Paullina Meeting and recommends that the yearly meeting approve having the IYMC clerk endorse the travel minute. M&C looks forward to receiving a report from Deborah next year about her continued travels in the ministry.

Friends asked Liz Oppenheimer (Bear Creek) to continue serving another year as clerk of Ministry and Counsel. Liz agreed to do so.

M&C has provided a clearness committee to Omaha Meeting this last year, as they discern God’s direction for them as a meeting. The IYMC Ministry & Counsel Committee remains an important resource for our monthly meetings going through struggle and as they provide care and nurture to their members and attenders, whether floundering or growing and everything in between. We are Friends in the Spirit, parts of the same body, all worthy of attention and care.

On behalf of the committee,
Liz Oppenheimer, IYMC M&C clerk