

REPORT FROM SAYMA'S REPRESENTATIVES TO THE AMERICAN FRIENDS SERVICE COMMITTEE  
YEARLY MEETING 2017

This year is the 100th anniversary of AFSC so our annual meeting was combined with a special "Summit for Peace and Justice" celebration. In addition to our meetings for worship and business there were also a large number of workshops, academic presentations and keynote speakers open to the public. There was a wonderful exhibit of the work of AFSC over the past 100 years on display at Philadelphia's African American Museum called "Waging Peace: 100 Years of Action." Friends are invited to arrange for hosting of the exhibit in their communities and a flyer explaining how that can happen is attached. During the business sessions, we did the basic work of the Corporation including approving nominations to the Board of AFSC and also approving the members-at-large to the Corporation. (Note: the Corporation has about an equal number of Representatives appointed by Friends' Yearly Meetings and Representatives selected by AFSC's Nominating Committee. All new representatives are approved by the existing Corporation Members each year.)

Friends may remember that AFSC had to contract after the economic recession of 2008. Since that bottom, giving had improved and AFSC's assets had climbed back up. However, unrestricted donations had remained modest and were below expectations. AFSC's budget relied too much on interest from investments and hoped for large bequests. Forecasted revenues that were too optimistic led to growth in programs that cannot be sustained with the resources at hand. This has forced AFSC to reduce staff by 13% in the next fiscal year. To avoid this problem in the future, AFSC is working to better predict where unrestricted income will be coming from and as well as what endowments can be expected.

One result of budget shortfall is the recognition that AFSC's work needs to be more focused. AFSC is currently working in 14 countries and in 15 U.S. cities. Other not for profit organizations with that much geographical spread have much larger budgets supporting their work. The current budget shortfall gives AFSC the opportunity to discern what we are led to do under current conditions. It is also an opportunity to remember that programs were expected to grow to a size that would lead to their being phased out and were not expected to continue indefinitely. Ending an AFSC program can be seen as a sign of success. At some point in the weekend someone quoted Richard Foster saying that "Every firm yes requires many firm noes."

Shan Cretin, AFSC's General Secretary, told us that she had a goal of 100% of all Friends making a donation to AFSC as a way to reclaim ownership of AFSC regardless of the size of the donation. With concomitant values and prayers for AFSC we find that Friends everywhere are welcome to become engaged with AFSC's work. There has been a commitment by AFSC to initiate outreach directly to the Religious Society of Friends' Monthly Meetings, so as to assist them the work they are or wish to do in their local communities. Shan also introduced us to Joyce N. Ajlouny who will become the new General Secretary beginning in late 2017. Joyce comes to us with 25 years of organizational leadership, including her current role for the past 13 years as Director of the Ramallah Friends School.

We all appreciate the opportunity to represent SAYMA as members of the American Friends Service Committee Corporation.

John Adams

Arnold Karr

Free Polazzo

Lee Ann Swarm

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Note: SAYMA's representatives to the American Friends Service Committee are members of AFSC's Corporation, the representative governing body of AFSC. In addition, John Adams is also on the Board of Directors and serves as its Assistant Clerk.