

Proposal to Temporarily Suspend  
SEYM Youth and Young Adult Coordinator's Service

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I. Reasons for request

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, Southeastern Yearly Meeting has not held an in-person event since January 2020. Our yearly meeting gathering, a late spring young adult retreat, the youth and families retreat, fall interim business meeting, and Half Yearly Meeting have all been cancelled or moved online. Youth participation in online events has been low, a pattern that is consistent with trends in other Quaker communities (including other yearly meetings and Friends General Conference).

The SEYM Youth and Young Adult Coordinator position was created in response to a leading I received, which was then taken up by SEYM as a whole, to nurture SEYM's youth and young adults and the yearly meeting as a whole through youth and young adult ministry. The YYAC is charged with planning youth and young-adult focused events, strengthening programs for youth and young adults at existing intergenerational events, visiting meetings to offer workshops and consultation, and sharing resources.

All of the above functions are limited by the inability to meet in person. In addition, finding ways to continue this work, under difficult circumstances, without the boost of energy and connection afforded by in-person gatherings, has been draining.

The YYAC position was approved for a period of three years. By August, six months of those three years will have happened under pandemic restrictions.

The present circumstances prevent me from doing much of the work to which I feel led. With no specific end to the pandemic in sight, I feel grief at the prospect of running out any more of my three-year term doing work that, while not unimportant, is not the work to which I have felt, and continue to feel, led.

For those reasons, I am proposing a suspension of the YYAC position which would pause the three-year term I have agreed to serve, and resume it when it becomes safe to hold in-person events again (or at the discretion of the YYAC, EC, and Youth Committee).

II. Consultation process

The following groups and individuals have been consulted on this proposal prior to its presentation to EC:

1. YYAC support committee
2. YYAC direct supervisor

3. Youth Committee
4. Presiding and committee clerks of Orlando Monthly Meeting (OMM) re: YYAC housing agreement

The YYAC support committee, YYAC supervisor, and SEYM Youth Committee are all in support of the proposal to temporarily suspend the YYAC position. OMM clerks are considering what the meeting's capacity is to extend housing beyond the original agreement, but a decision is unlikely before monthly meeting worship with attention to business on August 10.

### III. Proposal

I propose that SEYM EC suspend the YYAC position from September 1, 2020, until January 1, 2021. If any party (YYAC, Youth Committee, or EC) is uncomfortable with restarting on January 1 given the public health situation at that point, the leave can be reviewed and extended by EC at WIBM in mid-January, and if needed, at subsequent EC meetings. During this leave, the YYAC stipend would not be paid, and no work on behalf of the yearly meeting would be expected.

### IV. Options for the suspension period

Pastoral care and support needs of youth, young adults, and families in SEYM continue, and in some ways are magnified by, the current situation. The lessening of supportive contact with families and young adults is a significant potential downside to the suspension of the YYAC position, but may also be an opportunity to more intentionally engage SEYM's volunteer resources in this work. Below are YYAC-initiated projects that I think could potentially be continued by volunteers while the position is suspended. I could help with identifying volunteers, training them in hosting SEYM events on Zoom, answering questions, and sharing tips and information that I have used to run these events previously.

1. Movie nights

An Orlando Monthly Meeting activity that the meeting agreed to open up to the rest of SEYM when it moved online. Planned through August, needs meeting approval to be extended beyond that (or could be adopted by SEYM).

2. Young adult discussion nights

These have been well-attended, and are simple to run.

Workshops for monthly meetings on topics like outreach in pandemic and pastoral care for families could be planned and led by the YYAC (before leave period begins) or others (during leave), and conversations initiated with varied staff and committees about what they are doing for youth, young adults, and families.

Youth Committee is discussing the possibility of continuing to offer some online programs for youth and families during the leave period.

### V. Next steps

I am preparing this proposal for consideration at the August 8th Executive Committee meeting, with September 1 as a tentative start date for a suspension/leave. This timeline would allow three

weeks for putting support systems in place for the interim period. It also ensures YYAC availability through the summer, with leave beginning only after the school year has started in most or all districts.

I am asking EC to approve this leave on August 8th even though OMM will likely not yet have made a determination about housing availability. I have a back-up housing option if needed during my leave time, and trust that we could find a solution together if OMM housing is not available after the end of the current agreement (which extends to the end of 2021).

EC members can email [yyacoordinator@seymquakers.org](mailto:yyacoordinator@seymquakers.org), or call or text 407-850-8457, with any questions about this proposal or its expected implementation. The YYAC and at least one Youth Committee co-clerk also plan to be at the EC meeting to discuss the proposal.