Knowing that many Friends value the multiple programs and services that the Yearly Meeting offers local Meetings and individuals, both young and old, Development set a high goal for itself when it said that it would raise $711,000 toward BYM's overall income for the 2018 budget. Closely questioned about this figure at the time the budget was approved at Interim Meeting in November 2017, Development Director Ann Venable responded that she believed the Yearly Meeting has the “capacity” to receive this kind of support. She acknowledged that such a goal was ambitious and would be a stretch. It would require, she said, a “willingness to give” on the part of individuals in particular, but also local Meetings, because they believed BYM’s services and programs were important and should be supported.

As it strove to reach its 2018 budget goal, Development Program’s focus continued to be on making more potential donors aware of all that the Yearly Meeting provides its constituents. Over the past four years, efforts to increase this awareness has been reflected in the steady growth both in the number of donors supporting BYM as well as the total amount contributed. For 2018, by mid-June there were 265 contributors (individuals or family units) compared to 239 at the same time a year earlier. Total contributions more than doubled from January to June 2018 as compared to the prior year.

BYM’s Vision Statement speaks of our aspiration to be a more diverse and inclusive community. The programs that the Yearly Meetings offers – and are best known for – like the Camping Program and the Women’s Retreat, work hard to ensure that they engage a significant number of individuals of color, differing sexual orientations, and economic backgrounds. A newer program, STRIDE (Strengthening Transformative Relationships in Diverse Environments) specifically focuses on raising funds for and preparing more campers of color to the Camping Program.
As it reaches out to potential donors, the Development Program shares information about these popular programs; first because they are important components of BYM’s structure and need financial underwriting, but also because they are helping to fulfill the Yearly Meeting’s vision of being a loving and inclusive community.

Donors in 2018 responded by showing their “willingness to give.” Between January and mid-June, donors to the Camping Program had given nearly three times as much as they had contributed in the same period in 2017. Gifts received in the first half of 2018 to support more diversity in the camps (STRIDE) also were three time what they were in January to June period of 2017. Some of these gifts resulted from Developments “50 Campers in 50 days” initiative which called on donors in the 50 days before the camping season opened to give the $1,500 needed to send one young person to camp for two weeks. As of early June, scholarship gifts had been received to cover 39 campers.

The Development budget set a 2018 goal of $4,000 for the Women’s Retreat, primarily for financial support for those who otherwise might not be able to attend. By early June gifts totaling $3,731 nearly reached that goal.

While the Annual Session Program Committee looked at possible ways to reduce the financial cost of the gathering, Development included in its 2018 budget goal $5,000 in gifts to support those who might need financial help in attending.

How to convey to constituents in an informative and engaging manner all the Year Meeting does is essential to what the Development Program does. This includes information sent to individual by postal mail or email, the Development pages of the BYM website, which includes new information about the giving under the new federal tax law, workshops and interest groups at Annual Session, and old-fashioned face-to-face conversations. Some of these conversations occurred at the 2017
Appreciation Luncheon at Annual Session the Development hosts of contributors. Another such luncheon is scheduled during the 2018 gathering.

Liz Hofmeister, Clerk BYM Development Committee