

Faith and Practice Revision Committee

Meeting Visit Report

Your name: Martha Gay
Meeting visited: Dunnings Creek
Date visited: 3/3/13
Traveling companion: Rebecca Rawls

Number attending: 6 initially, more came later.

Jot down below what you heard:

It was clear that for the most part, these Friends were not aware they were being asked to comment on a new draft *Faith & Practice*. Several had copies of the 1988 *F&P* with them, which they had just picked up from the Meeting's library to help them with this conversation. It was not always clear which version they were talking about.

Martha mentioned that some Meetings are unhappy with the increased number of Queries in the new draft, while others have suggestions of more to add. A Friend said she felt the more queries, the better, as this reflects the diversity among Friends. Queries are better than advices in allowing for and respecting diversity. At least one person expressed appreciation for the Voices.

The Meeting has also been trying to work out what participation in the life of the Meeting is appropriate for attenders. They looked to *Faith & Practice* for guidance and could not find it. Can something about this be added? The specific issue was about participation in Meeting for Business. There is distinction between information gathering (everyone is welcome to participate) and decision-making (for members).

Guidance found in the 1988 *Faith & Practice* is very helpful for memorial meetings. Friends hope – and expect – the current draft retains this guidance. They were pleased to learn that there will probably be examples of what to say at the beginning of services to introduce non-Friends to the format of the Meeting for Worship.

Martha read Betsy Meyer's queries about the draft *Faith & Practice*. In response, Friends said:

- The 1988 *Faith & Practice* does a pretty good job.
- The 1988 *Faith & Practice* doesn't say enough about what early Quakers believed, about "how it all got started," or about how we have changed through the years. "It's good to know where we came from."

Neither Rebecca nor I are completely certain which version of *F&P* was being referenced in the above comments. She thought it was 1988 and I thought maybe 2012.

The Meeting really wrestles with the task of preparing an annual Spiritual State of the Meeting Report. There is some guidance in the 1988 *Faith & Practice*, but they would welcome more.

Several issues arise from Dunnings Creek's situation as a small meeting with a scattered membership:

- ⤴ Centre Quarter has been unable to meet for some time, and this is a lively issue in this Meeting. Diversity might come into play here, as one Meeting, State College, is part of two yearly meetings and another, West Branch, is much different than the other two monthly meetings in the Quarter. The Friend who shared this concern was not clear whether F&P could be helpful with this issue.
- ⤴ Another issue that challenges Dunnings Creek Meeting is having the right balance between spiritual nurture for members and attenders and practical efforts at outreach. This refers I think to how best to use the hour set aside for adult Sunday School, which immediately precedes Meeting for Worship. It's hard to choose between religious/spiritual instruction and fellowship or more worldly concerns. Because they are small and spread out (most drive an hour or more to get to the meeting house), they don't get together except on Sunday mornings. "Some Friends want to come for spiritual growth, not to plan a tea party to attract newcomers." But if they don't bring in new people, they fear their Meeting will die. A Friend who said she had been there for 36 years said that every two years or so, the Meeting gets concerned in a major way about outreach, then something always happens to bring people in. "We just have to wait and pray."

I think any advice we could offer to similarly situated meetings would be helpful.

This was offered as a joke: Should we have a new query on proselytizing?