

Baltimore Yearly Meeting Faith and Practice Revision Committee Proposed Advices, Queries and Voices

Fostering Community: Advices

Meetings can consciously cultivate fellowship and community. The Meeting is enriched when all members and attenders participate actively. The working of the Spirit in our lives is expressed through ministry, pastoral caring for each other, and the example provided by lives lived in the Light. As we worship, work, and laugh together, we forge bonds of trust, understanding, and communication. When need arises to address contentious issues, they then may be addressed openly and honestly. Conflict thus experienced can also build trust and intimacy. When resolution is not immediate, the Meeting can make room for different expressions of continuing revelation, while persisting in earnest search for unity. The larger Quaker community has many resources that can help meetings address internal conflict. Convictions that might divide or disrupt a Meeting can, through God's grace, help to make it creative and strong.

Fostering Community: Queries

What helps our Meeting build trust of one another?

How do we get to know one another in community?

How do we make time in our lives for our faith community?

How do our conflicts have the potential to enrich the life of our community?

Fostering Community: Voices

The life of a religious society consists in something more than the body of principles it professes and the outer garments of organization which it wears. These things have their own importance: they embody the society to the world, and protect it from the chance and change of circumstances; but the springs of life lie deeper, and often escape recognition. They are to be found in the vital union of the members of the society with God and with one another, a union which allows the free flowing through the society of a spiritual life which is its strength.

William Charles Braithwaite, 1905

The community thrives and is nourishing to its members not because its members are special people – on the contrary, they are very ordinary human beings – but because God is active in their lives, helping them rise above their personal standards and ideals to live together in a special way that blesses each other and the larger community in which they live. The ability of Friends to be in community with one another is a testimony to the continuing and redeeming presence of the Holy Spirit in their individual lives and in the community's midst, giving the grace and love to enable them to live with and love one another in the midst of all the problems, trials, and misunderstandings that humans create for one another when they try to be a community.

Lloyd Lee Wilson, 1993

The core of the Quaker tradition is a way of inward seeking which leads to outward acts of integrity and service. Friends are most in the Spirit when they stand at the crossing point of the inward and the outward life. And that is the intersection at which we find community. Community is a place where the connections felt in the heart make themselves known in bonds between people, and where the tuggings and pullings of those bonds keep opening up our hearts.

Parker Palmer, 1977

Where, then, can seeking men and women find a community in which meditation, worship, religious education of children, common undertaking and adventurous experiments, common festivals, and spiritual therapy are all going on, not as part of an expensive organized professional program, but as part of the informal natural life of a close religious fellowship?

Douglas V. Steere, *Community and Worship*

BYM Proposed Advices, Queries & Voices

It is not easy to find community and fellowship in the modern world. Many Friends view relationships within the local Meeting as similar to partial relationships established with people met regularly at work, at play, and in the neighborhood. It is perhaps too much to expect that we all will make the Meeting central to our lives. But unless the Meeting fellowship can be made to speak to something deep in our lives, our Society falls short of fulfilling the true spiritual needs of its members.

BYM Faith & Practice, 1988

The Society of Friends can make its greatest contribution to community by continuing to be a religious society - I mean, by centering on the practice of a corporate worship which opens itself to continuing revelation. Again, community is simply too difficult to be sustained by our social impulses. It can be sustained only as we return time and again to the religious experience of the unity of all life.

Parker J. Palmer, 1977

We may let God work when we yield to the reknitting of the worshiping community itself as the members are drawn nearer to the center and to each other. The community that has no such common experience to gather it into an inward fellowship as children of a single loving Father, has not yet experienced the deepest fellowship of all.

Douglas Steere, 1940

It is a remarkable fact that Friends for three hundred years have taken neither the path of religious authoritarianism nor the path of spiritual privatism. Instead, Friends have always accepted both the possibility of individual truth and the obligation of corporately testing that truth.

Parker Palmer, 1977

Our belief in the universality of the Inner Light requires us to "walk cheerfully over the world, answering that of God in everyone" as George Fox urged. No human being is excluded from our sense of community, for we are led by our faith to view human beings as children of God rather than as stereotypes of cultures, nations, or ideologies. It is individual people with whom fellowship must be established, and each Friend must seek in the quiet of worship the personal strength to work at the establishment of community.

BYM Faith & Practice, 1988

How can I participate in a fairer distribution of resources unless I live in a community which makes it possible to consume less? How can I learn accountability unless I live in a community where my acts and their consequences are visible to all? How can I learn to share power unless I live in a community where hierarchy is unnatural? How can I take the risks which right action demands unless I belong to a community which gives support? How can I learn the sanctity of each life unless I live in a community where we can be persons, not roles, to one another?

Parker Palmer, 1977

I believe that much could be accomplished by carefully planned intervisitation. There are highly gifted persons in a few meetings, who ought to circulate much more than is now the case. Their absence occasionally from their own meeting would throw the sense of responsibility on other members of it, which would have a wholesome effect, and they would bring fresh life and inspiration where they visited.

Rufus M. Jones, 1941

Friends who restrict their experience of the Society to their local Meeting are missing rich experiences of fellowship in the wider community. Quarterly, Half-yearly and Yearly Meetings as well as larger gatherings provide opportunities for Friends of all ages to broaden their experience of the Society and the circle of their spiritually-based friendships.

BYM Faith & Practice, 1988