

Friends Meeting of Washington  
Listening Session  
12-16-12

From the Committee: Jim Rose  
Recorder: Susan Hills Rose

Prior to the meeting, we heard from two individuals who could not stay. One missed the query, "Do you endeavor to tell the truth?" He said he missed the chance to engage in the conversation about the changes in the queries and would have liked to see all of BYM involved. Later we found the text he was looking for (p46) suggesting the Index needs to be improved.

Another friend said she missed the voices of older Friends from the 1600s such as Isaac Penington. She felt the balance was tilted too much toward more recent voices. It was noted that she hadn't visited the Index.

Nine friends were present at the meeting, which was held in Friends House.

### **Support Committee**

We heard that Friends were unfamiliar with the idea of a support committee but had heard of anchor committees. They were unsure what either meant.

### **Index**

Friends identified several terms that should be added to the index and stressed the importance of the index. They urged a careful review of the publication to find all the key terms. Those to be added included: divorce, death, aging, grieving, Jesus, spirit, God, spiritual, eldering, truth, safety, Christ.

### **Grieving**

Friends also wanted to be able to find material on grieving and grief. They were looking for how to support people who are grieving personal losses and also wanted guidance on how the community might respond to national tragedy or tragedy within the meeting or community. One gave the example of a candle lighting circle that mourned the onset of the Iraq war.

### **Life events**

A Friend asked for queries around a series of major events, such as when a new member joins the family, marriage, the breakup of a partnership, or death. She mentioned a New England YM resource that had such queries. It might be helpful to point to this book as a resource.

### **Memorial Meeting**

Friends also asked for an example of the statement the person running a Memorial meeting might make to introduce the meeting to Friends. The Washington DC meeting has one in the office and Langley Hill has one as well.

### **Adoption (Family)**

A Friend said the topic of adoption should be addressed, and she said the meeting had developed some queries on the topic she was willing to share. Friends gave the example of a Friend whose grandson was put up for adoption and keenly felt the loss of family. People considering adoption or giving up children

for adoption could also benefit from queries, and the meeting could use guidance on how to help them become clear.

### **Safety (Family)**

On p. 56, in the section on children and young people, the word “protection” needs to come up. Protecting children is an important meeting responsibility. The Friend suggested inserting under advices on that page, inserting: Affirm the gifts they bring and “ensure to the maximum extent possible their well-being and safety.”

A Friend mentioned a book by Alice Miller, *For your Own Good*, that is a helpful resource. It says that abuse creates a terrible internal state for which the remedy is an “enlightened witness” who can clearly say, “that was wrong.”

### **Ranting and Abusive Language**

A Friend spoke at length about the need for meeting to be a “safe haven” from ranters and personal attacks. She asked “to whom do I turn?” when I have been attacked? Another Friend said FMW had struggled with “neurological diversity” and differing levels of impulse control. Those present agreed it would be helpful to address this in the section on meeting functions (committees). Jim noted that meetings have different mechanisms in place to respond to conflict.

Friends wanted the book to point to the importance on nonviolent, clear, and nonabusive communication. It should speak to healing and reconciliation in the meeting.

A section on eldering is needed.

### **Mediation**

A Friend mentioned the Community Conferencing Center of Baltimore, which offers a model of restorative justice. He said people involved with the criminal justice system interact with victims and are helped to feel empathy. Staff offer workshops on community conferencing that can be a resource for meetings.

### **Use of Faith and Practice**

A Friend said the next edition should encourage creative uses of the book, which include for spiritual reading and practice at home and in inquirers’ classes.

Friends said hearing the section read before meeting has been grounding and has helped the meeting stay centered.

A Friend said the membership committee had suggested reading Faith and Practice prior to the meeting on clearness for membership.

### **Biblical Quotations**

A Friend asked for more quotations and references to the Bible.

A Friend pointed to a section on p. 4 that he felt went too far in the direction of Christianity. It said that the life of Jesus “revealed the will of God to humanity.” Some present wanted to leave the phrase and add the qualifier, “for many...” Another friend found the phrases “wholly Jesus’s own” also over the mark and in need of change.

### **Travel minute**

A Friend wanted to be sure there was a travel minute sample. FMW had used language based on a minute from Cambridge Friends Meeting.