

The listening session began during simple lunch, which was served at the rise of meeting for worship. Nine adults and one young child were initially present around the table. Mochiko De Silva guided what became a thoughtful discussion, the circumstances not being suitable for a 'typical' worship sharing format.

Preceding the discussion Annapolis adults read sequentially the "Proposed Faith and Practice: A Guide for Discussion" sent to all BYM Monthly Meetings by Elizabeth Meyer, presiding Clerk.

Mochiko followed by reading Query # 1 'Understanding that our faith is too deep for words, does the Faith and Practice adequately articulate our Quaker beliefs and testimonies, in order to inform those new to Friends and to inspire and challenge those with long experience of Friends?

(It having become apparent to Mochiko that due to the nature of the gathering and those present that responses would be forthcoming with greater contributions from particular persons and with reflections ensuing from the nature of all the 4 queries, rather than sequentially, and her being mindful of her role as servant leader for those gathered, she supported the next hour plus of the listening session in a free flowing (unprogrammed!) mode of sharing.

These notes, thus are herein recorded in a non sequential, and more thematic style.

(This morning at 9:00 a.m. Meeting for Learning, Annapolis Friends gathered to commence their Spiritual State of the Meeting report. The new Faith and Practice was used as a guide for this gathering. Thus these Friends have experienced in community the actual use of F and P. And this enriched the messages shared in the listening session. Friends reported that their sharing this morning was refreshing and engaging as they learned together to use F&P as a tool in community. There was the feeling among those at the 9:00 a.m session that this version of Faith and Practice builds community in this new format.

Affirmations of F & P:

- * The queries are Active and Personal, nurturing process over product, and enriching communal participation
- The advices add much to the queries, this speaks well to both newcomers and experienced Friends
- The juxtaposition of queries and advices is good/helpful
- The reordering of the queries is refreshing e.g having "Caring for Others" first!. This fosters Friends in Community, in 'right relationships', as vitally important to one another.
- Listening queries/advices/voices are very helpful. The diversity of 'voices' brings thoughtful perspectives to diverse Friends in community together
- The naming of the categories of advices are deep, not mechanical
- The 'rewording' of many queries e.g. 'How does the Spirit prosper among US?', enriches perspective, depth, community in seeking. This helps bring forth a new voice in 'us!'
- Wording of many queries with "How do you..." rather than "Do you" helps bring forth greater depth in both individual and communal seeking.
- This version of F and P is more engaging, more communal, more inviting. (This reflection was also expressed to Mochiko DeSilva and Elizabeth Koopman by an attender at Annapolis MM, who was not able to attend the listening session, but wished to convey how special the new version is to her a new comer to Friends. She experienced the 1988 version, which she borrowed when first attending meeting as 'dry' non-engaging, and boringly pedantic" and the new one as 'vibrant, and exciting.')
- The cover is beautiful and inviting.

"Sufficient explanation and guidance for our Quaker process?"

- **Concern** was raised and discussed as to whether the section on "Meeting for Business" was adequate in describing and invigorating the vital importance of our Meetings for Worship for Business as primary to Friends witness in the world. There was a sense among us (which included Friends born of Friends, long-time convinced Friends, and newer Friends that we, and many others, have been 'short changed'

in our education about the vital importance of Meeting for Worship for Business. The degree to which this phenomenon has been due to inadequate explications in our various Faiths and Practices (likely, including in this version), due to the 'negligence' of Friends during clearness for membership meetings (likely), to the lack of continuing reminders to Friends of the importance of Meetings for Worship for Business as joyful, vital, essential portions of both in-reach and outreach (likely). This reality likely affects "How the Spirit prospers among us."

(This recorder experienced this discussion together as wonderful and inspiring in itself.)

Suggestions of additional inclusions in F & P:

* Friends discussed the phenomenon of 'diversity of voices' in F & P, noting what is often termed the broad spectrum of Friends from e.g. "Christo-centric to Universalist". There was a sense of unity in the value of this diversity and also a realization of the tensions among Friends as we journey together in this diversity, (Ann Riggs of this meeting was noted in the discussion and her work with FUM in Africa.)

It was noted that for some persons, the 'ancient and archaic' language forms used when mentioning or quoting Friends' Christian roots may be off-putting to those who respond more easily to 'modern language' usage. Might some contemporary Quaker voices addressing "Christ/Christianity" be added to fill that void?

The group suggests that there be an **ADDED EXPLICATION** of Friends diversity (especially within BYM with its FUM/FGC affiliations, its history, and including the recent events of 'reconciliation' of Friends of FUM and those of FGC be included.

A need was expressed to know the 'reasoning and processing' of the F&P revision committee in its inclusion of non-Quaker voices in F&P. An explication, not a defense, would be helpful to the future users of BYM Faith and Practice. A brief written explication of this, would be welcomed as a small addition to Section 7 "History of Faith and Practice."

Discussion evoked a shared concern among those present to be able to name, know, and heal the ethnocentrism among us, including our 'racism'. Knowing that BYM does have a working group on racism, and an Indian Affairs Committee etc. along with many collaborative relationships among Friends globally whose hearts and minds and Spirits are aware of our inadequacies. Thought and focused attention to knowledge, compassion, inter-cultural relationships could enable us to realize more deeply "How the Spirit prospers among us all." We lay this before you as possible emissaries to the Yearly Meeting and its future discernment.

CONCLUDING COMMENTS TO OUR REVISION COMMITTEE

- **Deep gratitude for all your loving, caring, and wise hours of labor for BYM!**
- **This version of F & P, with the additions which you will likely be making before annual sessions is both Good and also adequate for us at this moment in our BYM Quaker history. Continuing revelation will ultimately bring forth our next version. We are well served by the version for this time in our history.**
- **Remain strong, loving, and courageous for the Spirit does prosper among you.**

Respectfully submitted to Mochiko DeSilva (Sandy Spring Monthly Meeting) and Kim Finch (Annapolis Monthly Meeting) by Elizabeth Janssen Koopman, substitute recorder for this Listening Session.