

Faith and Practice Listening Visits

Monangalia Friends Meeting, Morgantown, West Virginia

October 28, 2012

From the Committee: Jim Rose

Recorder: Susan Hills Rose

Listening:

We heard that in silence we can hear not just other humans, but the voices of nature. We heard the story of a noisy boat surrounded by dolphins; when the people fell silent, they could hear the dolphins breathing. We need to learn to listen for these voices as well.

Education:

We heard that earth is a wonderful teacher. We learn not just from each other, but from the many voices of the animals, the trees, the rivers – from the entire natural world.

Peace:

We heard that we should seek not only peace with each other, but also peace with the earth. “We are at war with the earth.”

Membership:

We heard that a long-time faithful attender may have more weight in a meeting than a person who is formally a member, but who does not attend or serve the meeting.

Queries:

We heard that the meeting has been using the queries in business meeting and in a worship group. One Friend said she found the queries useful in preparing for meeting; they helped her to focus and reflect on issues. However, she found there were too many questions within a single query; this was sometimes challenging, as the first question might be forgotten by the time the last one was read, and there were too many possible directions. A second friend agreed; if you have so many, you may forget one that touched you. Another friend suggested that perhaps the questions reflected different perspectives on the same general query (for example, individual vs. family or meeting). A friend added that the multiple questions within a query are not so problematic if the queries are being read on the written page as opposed to being read aloud.

A Friend said the queries were helpful in educating new Friends.

A Friend said she liked the voices very much. She found them deep and appreciated the different historical periods represented.

A Friend said these sections (queries, advices, and voices) were about the right length.

One Friend felt strongly that there should be no more than twelve sections so that queries could be handled one per month. The Friend suggested combining some sections.

Equality or Vocal Ministry (or both)

We heard that people should be encouraged to use gender inclusive language, especially in vocal ministry. A Friend spoke of “First Day pain” that occurs when this is not the case.

Providing Support as a Community

Meeting members recalled the challenge of supporting an elderly couple in many practical ways until they could move to a retirement home. For example, they helped arrange transportation and took them shopping. This occurred over a period of five years. The couple’s children were thousands of miles away; they came periodically to meet with the committee that handled support.

Guidance for Meetings

The Clerk found that the book’s guidance was on target and consistent in many cases with the meeting’s own experience and decisions.