

Notes from FMM's Study group on BYM's 2013 Draft Faith and Practice

Friends were invited to attend three sessions as described below :

Ministry and Counsel is sponsoring this study group at 9AM 3/10, 3/17, and 3/24 with an additional second hour worship sharing – feedback session with Margaret Stambaugh (representing the BYM Draft Faith and Practice Committee) on April 14th at the rise of Meeting.

We will be considering the follow sections of the 2012 Draft Faith and Practice :

3/10 - Living our Faith pgs. 1-50

3/17 – Queries Advices Voices pgs.51-130
and Appendices pgs. 240-288

3/24 – Our Quaker Communities pgs. 131-239

Our purpose is to study the document so that when we meet with Margaret Stambaugh on April 14th we will be prepared to respond thoughtfully to the following queries:

1 - Understanding that our faith is too deep for words, does the *Faith & Practice* adequately articulate our Quaker beliefs and testimonies, in order both to inform those new to Friends and to inspire and challenge those with long experience of Friends?

2 - Does the *Faith & Practice* provide sufficient resources, such as queries and advices, to assist us in accountability one to another in our Monthly Meetings and as a Yearly Meeting?

3 - Does the *Faith & Practice* provide sufficient explanation and guidance for our Quaker process?

4 - Does *Faith & Practice* provide guidance and structure while inviting the work of the Spirit and continuing revelation?

Attendance at one or more of the three sessions included several Friends.

At the beginning of each session, we paused in silence and appreciation for the work already put in and noted a sense of hesitation to offer any suggestions after the committee has worked for so many years on this.

However, recognizing we were being invited to offer feedback, we each shared from our experience in reading and using the book.

Overall comments:

Friends recognized the 2013 Draft Faith and Practice represents a snapshot of a given point in time that will change as we evolve as a Society. It was agreed that it is useful as a reference for conducting our business as officers and clerks of Meeting's committees, though some have used it more than others and on this reading, some were surprised and delighted to find guidance for issues at hand. The process of considering it together was useful. One Friend reported that she had used it in her daily meditation was especially moved by the "voices" section where she encountered some familiar favorites. Another person reflected the first section doesn't communicate the passion she recalls when reading the PYM Faith and Practice she was given as a new member many years ago. Several saw this not as an outreach tool, but a resource for those who are serious about the journey. The section on healing was useful. We thought the content in the section on queries, advices and voices inspiring and captures the passion and diversity. We think the document allows for flexibility of function for individual Meetings and it clearly invites continuing revelation.

Some of our specific suggestions included:

1. We discussed how we thought the sections might be more broadly useful if reorganized so that the testimonies line up more directly with, queries, advices and voices.
2. Expand the community section to include mention of how we care for each other through all ages and stages of life including life's temporary or permanent diminishments: mobility, hearing, sight, and other related health issues.
3. Include more specifics about how we support each other through death and dying.
4. Include queries and voices around these issues.
How do we nurture and support our elders and others in their diminishments?
Do we care for each other in all ages and stages of our lives?
5. Include aging, death and dying, same sex marriage in the index.
6. Expand references to include:
 - a. John Youngblut's *Hallowing One's Diminishments*;
 - b. Britain YM Intergenerational conversations from the perspective of the elders;
 - c. Mention that individual meetings have handbooks for support with death and dying.
7. In the BYM Minutes section, we noted that the minutes don't accurately reflect FMM's growth and development timeline.
8. Quaker Organization Section: Include Kendal at Lexington as Retirement Option; Right Sharing of Resources; and a listing of BYM Monthly and Quarterly Meetings .