

York Meeting Faith and Practice Discussion with Margaret Stambaugh On February 10, 2013

Attendance: 11 York Friends, 1 first time visitor and Margaret

Query 1

1. There seems to be an ethos of love, caring and openness that resonates throughout this draft of Faith and Practice.
2. One Friend says that he is mesmerized when reading the drafts of Faith and Practice leading up to the current edition which gives a deeper meaning (to his Quaker experience).
3. The reformatting of the Introductory Statement into Who are the Quakers? Now serves as an apology. It feels like it has been watered down from a religious standpoint to invite people in a less threatening manner. Does it pander to those who may be led to visit?
4. To use an analogy, this Faith and Practice is like a snapshot of who we are right now. It may not be complete. We tried to get everybody into the picture but we may not have succeeded. Considering our belief in ongoing revelation, any snapshot taken today will be outdated as soon as the next day.
5. Some things could be repositioned in Faith and Practice. For example the queries, the faith portion of our community, are like the snapshot of today. The snapshot of today is more important than the history, an old snapshot.

Query 2

1. A Friend is grateful that we spent 3 First Days discussing this draft of Faith and Practice.
2. For many Friends an appendix containing maps and diagrams of our Friends in BYM would be welcomed. An appendix listing the Meetings within the Yearly Meeting is a very helpful resource in other Faith and Practices from other Yearly Meetings allowing Friends to be in touch with one another and to be accountable to one another. Faith and Practice is used by newcomers and long-experienced Friends and as such an appendix in addition to the Yearbook would be helpful.
3. The queries represent where we are today focused on certain topics and certain concerns which will change. The advices also represent where we are today.
4. The addition of more queries is a good thing.
5. The voices are very helpful. The increased quantity of voices is quite helpful.

6. One Friends shares that he kept a book of quotes from older and contemporary Friends that were meaningful to him at the time. He would have added an extra 20-30 pages of voices.

7. Britain Yearly Meeting has 42 queries. Each Meeting uses the queries differently. Some Meetings read them at Meeting for Worship, some at Meeting for Worship with a Concern for Business, while others read them one or all of them weekly or monthly not in any particular order.

8. The rewording of the queries "how do I..." instead of yes/no type questions is more challenging for all phases of one's spiritual journey.

9. Throughout and adequately there is a reminder that being a member of the Religious Society of Friends is not a solo journey but part of a community journey. Part of seeking will likely entail the seeking of an individual and the seeking of a community. Who we are in community is well communicated in this edition.

Query 3

1. A Friend is pondering just how changeable the words Quaker and Friend have become. The book of John encourages us to be friends. He wonders, "How do I address myself or inform others who I am?" "I am a Friend of Jesus of Nazareth or a Friend of the Religious Society of Friends." The term "Quaker" leads to a form of categorization like Catholic, for example. The term "Friend" without saying everything says so much. The section entitled "Who are the Quakers?" uses Friend and not Quaker. Quote by Howard Brinton:

"Quakerism is here described in terms of its ideals, not necessarily its attainments. In avoiding one form, Friends sometimes slipped into another. Forms and creeds are inevitable. They have important uses, especially in education, where forms are used to show what ought to be the real content, and even, sometimes, to create the content. Our Christian religion would be weak and vague without the doctrines which undergird it. Quakerism does not aim at formlessness and undiluted mysticism. It is a peculiar and unusually stubborn effort to create a kind of religion in which the outward form expresses, as nearly as possible, the inward thought and life." from "Friends and their Spiritual Message"

2. A first time visitor shares that the only way to be a servant of God is to be an example. She appreciates Quakers because they are very free. They don't judge. They are so open and so liberal.

Query 4

1. As a newcomer one Friend was given pamphlets first and then Faith and Practice. He and his wife have been using it. What he has experienced is that Faith and Practice gives a breadth of experience. This book gives an idea of what to expect. A lot of experience is learning more about the Light. Reading more pamphlets and experiencing this weekly (Meeting for Worship and Worship Sharing) along with 2

Quaker weddings and baptism is to experience something that is different. Faith and Practice is a good guide.

2. Another Friend states that his sense is that Faith and Practice gives adequate guidance. There are varieties in cooking. One way to cook is without precise measurements and yet everything turns out OK. Faith and Practice is more suggestive than proscriptive. Not hard and fast is what drew him to Friends. Each Meeting adds their own “seasoning” to these different practices.

3. Another Friend shares an affirmation of faith and Practice. She values the little quilt pictures of the Meetings on the cover. When she looks at them, the depiction of those Meetings shine forth as diversity. The cover is invitational and welcoming.