

Faith and Practice Revision Committee Annual Report 2023

The Faith & Practice Revision Committee devoted its first two meetings this year to a review of all the documents that the committee has sent out to the monthly meetings; we also shared our spiritual autobiographies to help ground ourselves in a better understanding of each other and the work of the yearly meeting we are called to do. We reviewed documents with preliminary approval, draft documents that the committee is actively working on and draft documents that were put aside. Some documents were put aside because we were unclear on how they would fit in the structure of the book and thus how they might be best edited. Some documents were set aside because the comments from monthly meetings indicated they needed serious rethinking. Some documents were written to help the Yearly Meeting know how the committee was approaching the work and were not meant to be part of the book.

As we reviewed these documents, we considered writing style and how it has changed over the iterations of the committee. We considered content and how to organize the remaining sections of the book. We noted in the committee's earlier work the writing was more succinct. Was it because the material covered (Worship, Corporate Discernment, Testimonies, A Peculiar People) was of a more spiritual nature than later topics (Membership; Marriage; Pastoral Care; Ministry & Counsel)? In the later topics we were repeatedly asked for more detail – meetings were asking for clarity on their responsibilities surrounding these topics and for guidance on how to approach these issues. With those question in mind, we set back to work.

In 2003, F&P sent the Yearly Meeting the document “A Peculiar People”, a document we wrote for ourselves to clarify what it means to be a Friend. This year we went back to that document and revised it to serve as an introduction to the book. In the fall we will send it out to the monthly meeting for input. We have also reviewed the input from monthly meetings on the chapter on Ministry & Counsel and revised it to bring to Sessions for preliminary approval. A small group within the committee has continued working on a text tentatively named “Responding to the Promptings of the Spirit” which looks at how individual Friends are called to witness to their faith.

Our committee remains small. Although we gained two members over the past two years, this year one member resigned from the committee and we lost another member to cancer. Our numbers are still fewer than the intended sixteen Friends, and though we do not reflect the demographic diversity of the yearly meeting, we are grateful for our theological diversity, which does more closely represent the varieties of religious experience among the Quakers of New England. Our work together is not always easy but always contributes to our spiritual understanding and growth. We hope our chapters embody that seasoned discernment.

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