

Report on Debrief of 02/10/24 Permanent Board Meeting, Conducted on 02/19/24 on Zoom

Present: Polly Attwood, Fran Brokaw, Susan Davies, JT Dorr, Melissa Foster, Chris Gant, Janet Hough, Kristina Keefe-Perry, Rebecca Leuchak, Mary Link, Carole Rein, Willa Taber, Pamela Terrien, Eleanor Warnock, Carl Williams.

Worship sharing clerked by Willa Taber; note-taker, Carole Rein; review and edits, Polly Attwood and Susan Davies

Spirit of the Meeting

The meeting was held in a worship-sharing format making space for any present to share noticings and/or questions about noticings from the PB meeting on Feb 10 and/or related questions about the noticing practice.

Accessibility – both time and Zoom related

- Scheduling of debrief meetings – “6:30 pm on a weeknight is not conducive to those Friends with children at home to be able to attend.”
- The all-day length of PB meetings is difficult for those with less stamina or capacity to stay attentive in front of a Zoom screen for 6 or more hours.
- Wondered if there are ways to take attendance that don't take up precious time? (even as this last round was smoother).
- Concern that structures in place do not make it easy for NEYM Friends to participate in PB meetings where concerns relevant to them are taken up.

Faithfulness Noticings

- The beginning of the meeting was powerful and affirmed Friends' relationship with the Divine and each other. This felt encouraging.
- Appreciated that the clerk re-ordered the agenda to have discernments early on agenda (related to accessibility and bringing fresher energy to discernment items).
- PB and the clerk moved a contentious issue forward and PB united on approving Three Rivers as a monthly meeting
- Also noted was the faithfulness of the process used by the Legacy Gift Committee in reflecting on how its work has gone over a 10-year period

Three Rivers approval process and patterns of harm/oppression

Intent vs. impact

- While stated intention was not to single out any one person in considering Three Rivers monthly meeting status, a single person (not present) was named repeatedly and with damaging implications made.

- Criticism was expressed about the slowness of the process, with frustration that simple approval of MM status was not given, though it was recommended by the sponsoring monthly meeting for 3 Rivers wg.
- One Friend who interrupted the clerk was then silenced by another Friend. This felt jarring.

Digging Deeper:

Wondering: Why was the consideration of Three Rivers application to be a monthly meeting so contentious? Let's examine it, not dismiss it too quickly.

- Why was one individual Friend named repeatedly when Friends' faith and practice aspires to take care for the reputation of others?
- Were we seeing evidence of (unconscious) patterns of internalized homophobia expressed in the focus on this individual, and 3 Rivers, due to their commitment to Queer friends?
- A Friend expressed uneasiness that we were falling into speculation and generalizations beyond the February 10th PB meeting. They stated their understanding that debrief meetings are intended to examine the actual events within PB meeting, with reflections on what happened there, and why, but advised caution about unrestrained generalizing or speculating without facts. Hold uncertainty when there is not certain proof. This feels uneasy, queasy.

Yearning for Healing

- A Friend expressed desire to take up the early Friends use of Meeting for Confession where Friends would gather to share what was on their hearts that kept them separated from the Spirit.
- A quote offered: "Shame left unattended becomes disconnection".
- A Friend expressed weariness with the months of infighting, and lack of trust and generosity experienced; and a deep longing for us to become a community of faith where healing can happen. A desire was expressed that we arrive at a place where we listen for how God is calling us to be, both as an organization and as people, recognizable as Christians by our love for each other.

Wonderings:

- Might it be useful to send PB minutes out sooner?
- Growing out of hearing about the Legacy Gift reflection process:
 - How might this reflection process be applied to other aspects of the work of PB and NEYM?
 - Where is the right place for these kinds of concerns to be held?
 - Where is the right place to hold the grief we feel when we don't live up to the best of what we want to believe we can be? Where is the right place to hold healing?

- I wonder, while some kinds of business that PB has been asked to care for is appropriate (finance, plus more), if too much has been added. Perhaps some things could go to ministry and council. Or, maybe, similar to Legacy Gift, take it on for 10 years, then reflect on how it went. These are **big** questions.
- When will Friends join with the faithful labor of working groups, committees, and individuals laboring to bring witness to NEYM Friends and not be caught up in internal processes that distract us?
- How do we move from noticing patterns of oppression to transforming them? In some instances, noticing something in oneself can lead to immediate change; in other instances, deeper work is needed. Where does that work happen?
- Quoting an influential teacher from another faith tradition speaking to the challenges of anti-oppression learning and practice, one Friend shared their teacher's query: "Do you love me enough to show me what I don't see?"