

Sunday Evening

2.1 Opening Worship

Maggie Edmondson (Winthrop Center) prayed us into worship. She called on God, “whom we know by many names and no name,” to help us work faithfully as parts of a whole, to encourage one another, and to respond to news of violence and hatred in the world with fierce love. She called on us to listen to one another with open hearts and open minds, and to commit ourselves joyfully to the discipline and the love that is required of us.

2.15 Greeting from Laura Everett

Laura Everett from the Massachusetts Council of Churches greeted us, the “convicted but not yet crucified” Friends. She thanked us for the unique contributions of the Society of Friends and reminded us to avoid the pitfall of “terminal uniqueness,” of turning our uniqueness into idolatry. The challenges we face are the same as those faced in every church. She invited us to gather on September 20 to commemorate 400 years of black resiliency.

Laura also shared that the Massachusetts Council has organized an Ecumenical Prayer Calendar and that throughout this month they pray for New England Yearly Meeting. “... *We remember especially this day the New England Yearly Meeting. Bless them and their congregations. We give thanks for the spiritual gifts that these sisters and brothers in Christ share with all your people. Remind us that these ministries are for your whole church in your whole world. May the God of peace give us peace at all times and in all ways ...*”

2.2 Elders for Noticing Patterns of Oppression and Faithfulness

The elders for Noticing Patterns of Oppression and Faithfulness explained their purpose and roles to us. Their role is not to call people out or to propose solutions, but to open the way for the Yearly Meeting to discern the next faithful thing for us to do, as a body and as individuals. This will not be a comfortable experience, but Friends are urged to be not afraid.

2.3 Faith & Practice Revision Committee

Phebe McCosker (Hanover), Clerk of the Faith & Practice Revision Committee, as well as members Doug Armstrong (Action), Marion Athearn (Westport), Rachel Cogbill (Plainfield), Susan Davies (Vassalboro), Eleanor Godway (Hartford), Eric Edwards

(Sandwich), and Maggie Edmondson (Winthrop Center), reviewed for us the charge of the Faith & Practice Review Committee and the background of its current work.

They presented us with the chapter on Membership, asking for preliminary approve on. This chapter came before Sessions last year. The committee is also working on a draft chapter on marriage. We will be looking forward to your input on that for the next Sessions.

The chapter on membership, particularly the section on dual membership, has been rewritten after comments on the floor last year.

Dual membership is a difficult topic for NEYM; the subject has come before us multiple times. Last year was the first time you had the opportunity to hear what each other thought about it. We did not find unity at that time.

Monthly meetings have reported a large variety of opinions on dual membership. Some have minuted approval of dual membership, others are profoundly uncomfortable with it, while some have come to reject the concept of membership entirely in order to be “welcoming to all.”

The clerk reminded us that in the preface to Faith & Practice which has been approved, it is clear that Faith and Practice is a “*devotional resource and a handbook of procedures... designed to be a helpful guide not a rigid instruction manual.*” Friends expressed several concerns with the chapter, mainly having to do with the nature of membership. Individual cases will sometimes be difficult, but in each case the meeting is seeking the will of God for the individual and the community.

Friends approved the preliminary acceptance of the revised chapter on membership, aware that membership is a confusing and complicated topic and one in which there are differing understandings.