

Report from Discipline Committee, Pacific Yearly Meeting

February, 2011

Discipline Committee met in January at the Berkeley Meeting House to consider issues that have been brought to us.

1. Yearly Meeting requested that we research the archives and recommend a **procedure for interim appointments** for representatives to other Friends' organizations and to committees of the Yearly Meeting. The procedure is not detailed in Faith and Practice, and Yearly Meeting occasionally must appoint Friends at times other than an annual session.

We recommend:

1. that the Clerk of the Yearly Meeting together with the Nominating Committee provisionally approve interim appointments that URGENTLY need to be made to Yearly Meeting positions and committees other than Nominating Committee,

2. that the Clerk, together with the Naming Committee, provisionally approve URGENT nominations to the Nominating Committee,

3. that the Treasurer be authorized to reimburse the expenses of those appointed in this manner until Yearly Meeting Plenary approval.

The Yearly Meeting Plenary would approve interim nominations. We would expect that the procedure PYM Plenary adopts for interim appointments would be added to the next Faith and Practice revision.

2. There have been concerns from time to time about our **minute writing practices** and how we refer to them in the Discipline. What degree of detail in minute recording is required? Friends researching our decisions in past minutes have sometimes been dismayed at the lack of detail recorded when they seek to understand the thought behind our past decisions. While substantial detail may be too much, some Friends have expressed a desire to have a little more background in minutes so Friends in the future could better understand the reasoning behind our minutes. Other Friends have expressed regret at time "wasted" in

plenaries by lengthy discussion of plenary minutes. One Friend wrote us about a concern that Faith and Practice discusses only minutes of action and of exercise, while Meetings' usual practice is also to record narrative minutes. We were asked whether a discussion of narrative minutes might be included in a future Faith and Practice. The Committee felt that a discussion of minutes and the appropriate level of detail in minutes would be useful. We requested an Interest Group on the subject of minutes at the 2011 annual session. Eric Moon and Carolyn Stephenson have agreed to lead the group; other past PYM recording clerks may join them in facilitating this discussion.

3. Some Friends have asked that the Yearly Meeting recognize a **new testimony on Earthcare** in future editions of the Discipline. A testimony recognizes beliefs and practices common among Quakers. In light of this, we considered: Is Earthcare a part of our Quaker identity? Is it intrinsic to our understanding of the ways that the Spirit works within us? Is Earthcare a witness to our relationship with the Spirit? We concluded that Earthcare does not yet seem to be a recognized testimony among PYM Friends, but will continue to consider this as the concern develops in our Quarterly and Monthly meetings.

4. Friends have asked us to **consider revising the Advices and Queries**, either for a new edition of Faith and Practice or as a separate publication. Among the specific concerns brought to us were:

1. The questions of whether queries that could be answered with a simple yes or no were really advices rather than queries that ask us to reflect more deeply, and
2. The form of queries, with respect to first or second person questions (I/we, vs. you). It is important to think about who is asking.

We are researching past Advices and Queries in the archives and considering what form a revision might take; whether a revision of just the Advices and Queries, or whether a revision of the full Faith and Practice is needed. We would like to survey Meetings about their use of and degree of satisfaction with the advices and queries and are thinking of ways this might be done. We plan to continue working on this topic, and may facilitate an interest group on advices and queries at our annual session in 2012.

5. We have been asked to consider whether the Yearly Meeting should make concrete plans for the **revision of Faith and Practice**. We feel there is no clear need to revise the book due to the small number of changes required to update the Discipline to reflect our current practices. While this committee does not sense a need at this time to begin work on a new revision, we decided that it was appropriate to continue to consider whether we might want to revise just the advices and queries at this time.

Jan Tappan
Clerk of Discipline Committee