Thoughts for

VISITORS and VISITED

NPYM Committee on Outreach & Visitation

2014
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North Pacific Yearly Meeting (NPYM) encourages intervisitation among Friends across the broad expanse of our yearly meeting. We have put together a few pages which may be helpful to those considering visiting or hosting. A major resource for visitation is the NPYM Directory, the list of meetings and worship groups in NPYM which is revised and distributed to each meeting and worship group annually by the Yearly Meeting Secretary. The list includes the location of meeting houses, the times and places of worship, and the contact information for clerks and contact people. Each quarterly meeting also maintains a list of isolated Friends who live far from any meeting or worship group. This list should be available in the Directory or from the Outreach & Visitation Committee. Together, these lists give the necessary information for taking the first step in visitation – the location of people and meetings which can be visited, and whom to contact.

The Outreach & Visitation Committee endorses a wide range of visits: group or individual, planned or unplanned, formal or informal. Since we are a widely scattered yearly meeting, we value all connecting links. Most of our meetings and worship groups have many members new to Friends. Both new and experienced Friends benefit from interaction and personal sharing.

INFORMAL VISITATION

Group visitation is often overlooked, but it can be an enjoyable and informal way of developing ties. A skiing trip or camping trip can be planned to include two or more groups of
Friends. A gathering at a central location for isolated Friends and small worship groups has proved exciting. Potlucks or work parties can bring Friends together from different groups. Meetings can take the initiative to specifically invite one or more other worship groups for a Sunday or an event. We urge Friends to think of these kinds of visits.

Casual visits by individuals or families can be carried out in many ways. Friends often provide hospitality for one another. A relationship begun, perhaps at quarterly or yearly meeting, may be extended by visiting in other homes. Or a request for hospitality may be channeled to a clerk or contact person. A conference of interest to many Friends, a large demonstration, a yearly meeting or AFSC committee meeting may draw Friends to an area. This can provide the opportunity for visitation outside Quaker events.

When offering or requesting hospitality, it is useful if visitors and hosts are clear on expectations and are open with each other. Are there special sensitivities or aversions, such as pets, noise, need for privacy? Are children involved and is care needed?

Is a home suitable to special needs; e.g., excessive stairs or not “childproof”? If host or visitor is uncomfortable with an arrangement, or cannot meet needs, either should feel free to say so. For example, some Friends are happy to provide hospitality, but not transportation or “guide service”. They do not feel able to entertain visitors, but are happy to provide “bed and breakfast”. Other hosts prefer to devote a significant amount of time with visitors and feel deprived if visitors have their own agendas and go their own ways. Sometimes the timing is poor for receiving visitors. If the visiting family is large, or if the visit is extended, a contribution to the larder is always appropriate.

In either group or individual visits, children deserve special consideration. Families with children of similar ages have much to share and may enjoy individual visits in homes. There needs to be sensitivity to the wide range of ways in which we raise our children, especially when families share a home. The exponential increase in excitement and stimulation when families with young children are together needs to be recognized. In group visits, plans for the inclusion of young people and/or special events for them deserve atten-
tion.
Isolated Friends also enjoy and appreciate informal visits. Some can provide hospitality easily; some can provide camping spaces; others do not have either facilities, but would enjoy a chance to talk and explore ideas and hear about Quaker activities. In all cases, advance notice is not only considerate, it is essential, to determine whether schedules can be meshed and a visit’s timing is feasible and welcome.

Some people may enjoy simply stopping for worship with a meeting or worship group while traveling. Such an unannounced visit can be stimulating and warm and lays no burden or expectations on hosts or visitors. Some of the worship groups meet in people’s homes, so a call to the contact person listed is usually necessary to determine the location of a particular day’s meeting. Worship groups usually do not meet every week, but if they know a visitor will be in the area, they can often arrange to meet, and welcome the opportunity. The Outreach Committee urges all Friends to consider the above variety of informal visits, and to explore and develop other ideas.

MORE FORMAL VISITATION
The Committee also encourages more formal, carefully planned visits. Such visits may be initiated by a concerned individual wishing to visit, perhaps with a special concern; they may be initiated by a Friends’ organization such as the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC), The Friends Committee on National Legislation (FCNL), the Friends World Committee for Consultation (FWCC), the yearly meeting, a monthly meeting, or the Brinton Visitor Program. Or, the initiative may be taken by a meeting or worship group, requesting a particular kind of visitor. The Web site [npym.org] has a list of resources for programs focusing on particular concerns.

Experience suggests that each group or meeting waits for someone else to take the initiative for visitation, so we encourage action!

While some visits need extensive planning, many do not. While expectations should be clear, we encourage hosts and visitors to be open to where an experience may lead.
The following ideas and suggestions are specific, hopefully to help Friends get past a vague and foreboding sense about visitation, which can inhibit experimentation.

CONCERNED INDIVIDUALS

The Outreach Committee has found the 956 FWCC publication by Ferner Nuhn, *Visitation Among Friends* useful. While fewer Friends now travel under concern, these comments seem helpful, especially the idea of testing a concern in one’s meeting. (Passages from the pamphlet have been slightly edited in an attempt to remove the non-inclusive language of the time.)

Often Friends have felt a special “concern” to visit other Friends. How does one recognize such a “concern”? This is a question which, perhaps, should not even be asked, for the person with a real concern knows that she or he has one. The stirring is within. A need is sensed, a “leading” or “drawing” which somehow one is impelled to answer is felt. Or one feels one’s own ignorance of the lives or conditions of other people, so that one is moved to widen one’s experience...

A Friend with a concern which is felt to be genuine will be glad to test its genuineness by presenting it for approval at business meeting. The wisdom and judgement of others may improve on the original plan, or may distinguish between a sound concern and an ill-advised impulse. The line between inspiration and idiosyncrasy – as Friends meetings well know – is often hard to draw... Early Friends frequently traveled in pairs, and this is still a most happy way to carry out intervisitation whenever possible.

Our *Faith & Practice* encourages all Friends with leadings to share a concern to form a clearness committee to season their concern before taking it to their Meeting. [see Concerns and Liberating Friends, p. 71. Paul Lacey’s Pendle Hill pamphlet “On Leadings and Being Led“is also helpful.] We find that a “travelling elder” who travels as a support, assistant and counselor always makes the travelling ministry more effective and easier.

VISITING AS A REPRESENTATIVE OF A FRIENDS ORGANIZATION

Friends visiting for an organization will usually have specific experiences or resources to share, which may stimulate or nurture a group. These visitors may well be responding to a request from a Friends group. Some people feel inadequate representing Friends. Yet we believe that all can offer their own experience and perceptions, humbly recognizing their limitations. Ferner Nuhn notes: “Most of all, [a visitor] needs to have a sense of the inner significance of all religious activity.” This is derived from direct experience. His pamphlet also included useful concrete ideas for visitors.

Every visitor will have a special way of inducing participation. A question period following a talk is a common way, and if the visitor has “spoken to the condition” of the hearers, there are sure to be vital questions. Another method that has been found helpful in small new groups or meetings, and even in older ones, is to begin the meeting with introductions around the circle in which each person has the chance to share personal things: background – especially religious background – reason for being there, and concerns of interest. None should be pressed to speak. The visitor may well set the tone for such a round of speaking first. The depth, candor, and creativeness, as well as the conciseness and point of expression will call out like qualities in others, and often very deep centers will be touched. Out of such an exchange may come the subjects most vital to the persons present and to the stage of development of the group. A
“floor” will have been laid, so to speak, upon which any further structure can be raised. Sometimes, a considerable part, even the major part, of an evening may be profitably spent in such an exchange.

In NPYM a number of people are experienced leaders in Quaker Dialogue with worship discussion queries, another method to promote in-depth sharing and searching within a Friends group, heightened by silence and active listening. AFSC, FCNL and FWCC visitors often provide an opportunity to explore how Friends testimonies and concerns are addressed in relation to our local, national and international communities.

A visitor, as an outsider to a group, may usefully listen to and reflect upon problems of an individual or of the group. A visitor, however, can neither engage in extensive counseling with individuals, nor salve group problems. Perhaps the greatest gift a visitor, as an outsider to a group, may bring is to usefully listen to and reflect back problems discerned of an individual ... 

**BRINTON VISITORS**

Howard and Anna Brinton were instrumental in initiating the Pacific Coast Association of Friends in 1931. In 1947, Pacific Yearly Meeting grew from the Association.

The nurturing role of the Brintons is commemorated in the Brinton Visitor Program. Although this cooperative venture of Inter-Mountain, Pacific and North Pacific yearly Meetings has been on hiatus, we have hopes of reviving some kind of similar traveling ministry of respected Friends.

**PREPARATION FOR ALL KINDS OF VISITS**

Visitation is a two-way experience. A visitor will be ready to receive as well as give. Indeed a visitor with something of value to give will almost certainly find more received than given. Conversely, a meeting which wants to get the most out of a visit will “be prepared in mind and heart” for the visitor, and be ready to give as well as receive...

> The spirit of expectancy will be found to rest to no little degree in practical preparations made for a visit. ...

> ~ Ferner Nuhn

The Outreach & Visitation Committee suggests consideration of the following ideas and questions, so that mutual expectations between hosts and visitors are clear, and

*Visitors appreciate a rough schedule in advance*
so that preparations can be checked.

I. Theme or concern
   A. Visitor
      1. Have you made clear your concern and/or the subject(s) you wish to share?
      2. Do you need any equipment, e.g. tape recorder, microphone, projector, screen, computer, etc.?
B. Visited
1. Have you shared your needs and what you hope the visitor will do and/or share with you?
2. Do you want special resources brought, e.g. pamphlets, books, bibliographies, A/V media...?

II. Schedule
A. Visitor
1. Have you shared what you are willing and able to do in the way of different types of meetings (public, small discussions, media, schools)?
2. If you are traveling from one group to another, has adequate time been allowed for travel, and have contact names been given to the preceding and succeeding groups? It is useful to develop such a schedule of visitation in consultation with groups to be addressed to avoid disappointment that everyone is committed elsewhere on the evening of your presentation!
3. Have you scheduled adequate rest, refreshment and private time?

B. Visited
1. Have you shared with your visitor the kinds of meetings you expect (public, informal discussions, primarily Friends, media, schools?)
2. It is helpful to include an idea of the duration of meetings as well as approximate numbers and nature of groups.
3. Visitors appreciate a rough schedule in advance, and a written, updated one, with host and contact names, address and phone, upon arrival. This is primarily valuable if a number of different events are planned.
4. Have you provided adequate time between events for transportation and for a breather? For a longish visit (over a day), have you provided rest time?

III. Travel and Hospitality
A. Visitor
1. Have you shared any personal preferences about where you stay; e.g. with a particular family or person, in a motel, in your own camper or tent?
2. Have you clearly requested travel assistance if you need it, and made clear any other expenses that need to be covered?

B. Visited
1. Have you made appropriate arrangements for accommodations, whether home hospitality, motel, campground, etc.?
2. Have you planned when and where the visitor will eat and made clear if any meals will be in restaurants and how expenses will be handled? e.g. “We’ll be eating lunch on the run and will cover your expenses” or “We’ll all be going Dutch to a modest near-by restaurant.” Be clear if a visitor is expected to fend for him/herself.
3. Are you clear about travel costs, expressing what you can or cannot cover?

While the subject of money is not easy for Friends to discuss, it is only fair to visitors and hosts to know what to expect and/or what is possible. Sometimes a special resource person who is traveling in the area needs to ask for an honorarium. If a group especially invites someone, they should expect to contribute at least to travel costs. If a person is traveling under concern, he/she might ask for help, but should not expect expenses to be covered. Local travel probably is generally covered by hosts. If a visitor chooses to
stay in a m/hotel, he/she is usually expected to cover that. NPYM does not have any formal fund to assist in travel expenses for other than Jr. and Young Adult Friends, but may consider developing one, if the need arises.

IV. Other Needs
A. Visitor
1. Have you shared with your hosts any special needs, e.g. dietary restrictions or preferences, allergies, rest times, childcare needs, handicaps?
2. Enjoy yourself!
3. Be open to the unexpected and cherish it.

B. Visited
1. Have you checked about special needs such as those listed above?
2. Have you shared special features of your worship group or meeting – issues of interest, stage of development, strengths and weaknesses?
3. Enjoy yourselves!
4. Be open to the unexpected and cherish it.

V. Afterwards
A. Visitor
1. How will you share your experience with your meeting or the Yearly Meeting?
2. What help will you need to come home?

B. Visited
1. What have you learned from hosting a visit, informal or formal?
2. What help will you need to adjust for the next visitors? What do you have to share with others from this experience?

CONCLUSION

We are reminded to “walk cheerfully over the earth, speaking to that of God in every one.” Visitation need not be undertaken only by “weighty Friends”. Their depth of experience is often very helpful; but so is the enthusiasm of newer Friends, fresh from their discovery of Quakerism. Once more, we urge special attention to informal visits and opportunities to strengthen relations among Friends. Above all, the NPYM’s Outreach & Visitation Committee hopes that we can develop personal ties across the great geographic distances of our yearly meeting, so that we become increasingly knowledgeable and caring about the family of Friends.
Following is a list of sources for visitors in NPYM. Please let us know if any of the contact information is out of date.

1. Outreach & Visitation Committee of NPYM

This committee keeps a list of people with willingness to travel and with special areas of interest: e.g. draft counseling, tax resistance, Quaker history, Quaker processes, etc. You should feel free to contact these people for your Quaker group. The committee can act as a clearing house for visitation requests, if you wish assistance. Groups should initiate contacts and requests for visit on their own as well. The Committee appreciates information before hand as you plan trips so that we may share information we have about opportunities or changing conditions. Clerk: ELee Hadley [contact info or hotlink]

These groups could provide resource people on a variety of topics related to development of a Friends group, beliefs, practices, worship and business.

2. NPYM, M&O Comm., NWYM

Yearly Meeting officers and representatives to Coordinating Committee, as well as the Yearly Meeting Ministry & Oversight Committee, frequently are available to talk about the Yearly Meeting and its processes, to encourage participation in Quarterly
and Yearly Meeting sessions or to discuss concerns or proposals that are coming up. Our region also overlaps the Evangelical Friends Northwest Meeting of Friends Church. Your group may wish to consider exchanges with their churches or inviting someone to come talk about their form of Quakerism. Clerk CC Clerk: M&O Clerk: [URLs can be found at npym.org ] [nwfriends.org/superintendent]

3. FWCC
The Friends World Committee is the only organization that attempts to connect all kinds of Quakers around the world. Our representatives, as well as former staff and officers of FWCC, are often ready and willing to talk about the wider world of Quakerism and the large role our YM has had in supporting the Family of Friends. [URL + YM coordinator]

4. AFSC, FCNL, QVS, FPT, FCUN/QEW, 1%/RSWR, FLGBTQC
Our Yearly Meeting connects directly with a number of special Quaker concerns organizations. The Service Committee has two offices in our region, which can offer information on issues as well as speakers. Members of YM are involved in all the others and are glad to share their interests and knowledge. Other organizations are worthy of the support and interest of all Friends, but depend on those Quakers called to work for them: Friends Committee on National Legislation, Quaker Volunteers, Friends Peace Teams, Quaker Earthcare Witness, Right Sharing of World Resources, and Friends for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transsexual and Queer Concerns. [contact URLs + names of YM contact person available at npym.org or Google them]

Quarterly Meeting Ministry & Oversight and Monthly Meetings
Although the Quarterly Meetings are set up primarily to support the worship groups and meetings in their area, and can offer assistance for local groups’ problems and questions, they also are a resource for finding individuals who can offer presentations on Quakerism and other concerns you wish to discuss more deeply. Worship groups should always make contact with the Monthly Meeting that cares for them and ask for assistance, including contacts with persons with special gifts to share. [QM URLs + clerks and M&O]

Marge Abbott, Clerk
Molly Barnett

Barbara Janoe
Howard Scott
Ann Stever

Illustrations by Katherine Willard

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