A Proposal to Facilitate Travel Among Friends

NPYM’s Ad Hoc Committee on External Quaker Relations has met throughout the past year. We have been gathering information on the different branches of Friends and polling our Yearly Meeting as to our attitudes towards them. We find that different Friends have different levels of interest in different branches: some are interested in all, some are interested in some, and some are interested in none.

We were contacted directly after Annual Session by a Friend who wrote about his experience after the plenary where our committee was formed:

But the Lord was at work in that mild night. After listening to the background statements on Thursday, I wrote this:

"Could we have a fund to assist in travel in budding ministries or study or exposure to other Friends groups? This might open the way to the growth in love and understanding that Don spoke of and John and I experienced. A committee could make offers, advertise opportunities and select from applicants."

This is an idea that our committee has enthusiastically taken up. We feel that if this fund were established and Friends donated into it, this would help to ease the problem of raising the Yearly Meeting assessment to fund our connections to other branches of Quakerism. The fund would be as great or as small as Friends were moved to contribute to it.

Thus our committee proposes to Annual Session that a fund for Traveling Among Friends be created and that the Outreach and Visitation Committee be asked to administer this fund. The purpose of the fund would be assist with the travel and lodging costs associated with representatives from our YM traveling to events/meetings/gatherings of other branches of Friends. It would be O&V’s job to keep track of which events among other branches were coming up in the next year and to discern which of the Friends who might indicate a leading to travel to this branch would be appropriate to represent our Yearly Meeting. This fund would not be used to simply fund attendance as a participant in an event like Friends General Conference or the Women’s Theological Society, but rather to travel as a representative of the Yearly Meeting to the various branches of Friends (this is different from Quaker organizations with which we are affiliated and have formal representative positions.)

The O&V Committee would need to serve as a discernment body for this task, similar to how a nominating committee functions. It would also have to manage funds and decide what could be funded within any given funding year. It would sometimes have to make difficult decisions about which bodies could be visited and which could not, based upon available funds. Because it is not likely to be financially possible to fund travel by members of our Yearly Meeting to all significant events held by other branches, funding decisions will have to be made that reflect the interests and priorities of NPYM.
We also recognize the role of leadings, both historically and going forward, as a force that may shape where Friends might go.

The committee would receive letters from Friends proposing an intended visitation to another branch (and traveling letters of support from their Monthly Meetings). Support would be granted as money allowed, based upon discernment of the appropriateness of the leading – whether it reflected a widely held impulse within the Yearly Meeting, or simply an individual leading. If multiple candidates step forward to represent us at a gathering of another branch, the committee would discern who is most appropriate to represent the Yearly Meeting. The hope is that the process would balance the clear leadings of Friends and the general interests of our Yearly Meeting. The committee itself will need no additional funding in the Yearly Meeting budget.