The Inquiry meeting was framed as a worship discussion on the topic of the Introduction. Jim facilitated. He began by pointing out that 17th century England was a “mess”, very challenging times, but George Fox’s Journal does not mention any of that. Whatever refuge the newly convinced Quakers found was in the home of Margaret Fell under the protection of Judge Fell. Fox wrote his Journal with a concern to define Quakerism. There was danger in letting other define Quakers as radicals in the same way that the violent Puritans were radicals. Fox took great pains to differentiate Quakers.

Jim noted that we, Quakers, have a specific prophetic message that is not fixed and keeps emerging. We need to rewrite ourselves at times. In our rewrite it is important to introduce ourselves. Jim invited us to envision a bridge, a bridge as an introduction. As we come across this bridge we are being “profiled”. In this section we have an opportunity to introduce ourselves. Jim reminded us that we must choose our words carefully.

- I would like to add two points to what Jim has just said we need to consider:
  1) “To whom is this introduction addressed? We have more than one prospective audience.
  2) This document will be a snapshot of a moving, dynamic community. We are not out to achieve the ultimate document forever more. We are responsible for capturing the snapshot of North Pacific Friends as we are right now. In this light I would offer one concern. The Introduction text as offered is that there is an emphasis on dependence on God. This does not reflect North Pacific Friends as we are right now. Not all Friends believe in God and if they do they would not call their relationship with God one of dependence.
- The opening paragraph struck me as negative, critical and a real downer. If we still want to say this, I suggest putting it at the end.
- I felt the same way. Others might begin by describing us this way but in this document we are defining ourselves.
- The underpinning of this seems to go back to “original sin” view of the faithful life – comes out of the old thinking. The old version of the Introduction was focused on the story. I found myself wanting to go back to the old version and bring whole pieces into this new version. This new text isn’t inviting. It is Old Testament; an older, harsher view.
- This first section should be a historical synopsis – the old version included lots of history. (It was pointed out that history was going to be in a different section)
- What they are saying in this new text is that the prophetic vision comes from the individual but is tested by the community. George Fox vs James Naylor. James Naylor had a spiritual gift but it was politically explosive so a community was formed to keep him in bounds. The light shining in each of us is not enough, the community must be ready and willing to season.
- In the words of religious studies students, it is impossible to give meaning to spiritual life without referencing people who embody spiritual aspects. It is impossible to put words to these abstract notions. The words mean something different if out of context of the people who live by these notions. Biography is the way we feel connected to the Way. People always have a life to go back to through which they understand the spiritual abstract.
- On Page 5: Names – These two paragraphs should be at the beginning, but the title should not be kept. This is the way we should begin telling our story.
- Corporate discernment should be after an explanation of the inward experience of God. The inward experience is the place to begin.
The biographical information offered is very important to be included and should not be lost.

We could offer what we wish for advice from the perspective of the seeker, even the bitter seeker.

The intro paragraph is not inviting (to the bitter seeker). Naylor is not representative of the Quakers. We might be considered radical to some but not by us. If we value the inner life, note it as a value, not as a radical negative.

I appreciate comments. In the “four thing” list there is a missing thing: openness beyond the Christian focus. I want to see what I see in Friends, wisdom and a strong Buddhist flavor of Quakerism in this part of the country. If I read this Introduction I wouldn’t come back to Meeting.

People say they like our old version. Can we ask that the old version be retained as a springboard for the new version?

New is just a reshuffled restatement of the old version. They seemed to have added a bridge between the old version and this new version that we don’t like.

They picked only one historical thread as a warning, but don’t have a historical warning against the Quietism period.

The use of headings causes me to lose the flow of the text.

The old version is gentler – conversational and welcoming. It has a tone that says, “It is OK to keep asking (seeking) because everyone else here is asking (seeking).”

Every month we seem to be saying we like the old version better.

I felt this text had a tone of apology. We are introducing ourselves. We don’t need to react to others. We need to frame ourselves and not describe ourselves by pointing to what we don’t do. I also noted an ambiguous struggle of voice. The text switches from “us” to “them”. I suggest taking the “them” pieces and changing them to “us”. Why would we refer to ourselves as “them”? Why apologize and create difference. It seems like the text is a philosophical apology based on a scriptural case.

The headers are a recent, “younger” style of writing. Modern text is broken up into bites so seven pages is not as daunting. Headers modernize our presentation even if the context is not so modern.

The new version is longer that the old version. Should we cater to shorter attention spans? The quotes included do not appeal to younger audiences. There is an emphasis on “master/servant” and “father/son”.

In our Meeting I experience more joy and warmth and questioning than I experience in from text. The vibrant conversations in our meeting are not captured in this snapshot. Maybe this text can be reviewed by Junior Friends to get their comments?

I appreciate the headers, they are helpful for finding content and having placeholders on the page.

Headers make it easier to check back on a reference.

“Corporate” doesn’t have a lot of resonance any more. In present time there is a lot of negative connotation to the word. Community is a more spiritual word. We should not use the word “corporate” any more (lots of agreement all around).

I suggest using “discernment” as a title rather than “corporate” because that is what the section is talking about.

I noted that in the old version there isn’t a central testimony called “integrity”. I have watched it be slipped in recently. How is it defined? Our first day school uses the acronym SPICE [Simplicity, Peace, Integrity, Community, Equality] but making a catchy acronym is not a good reason to slip “integrity” in as a central testimony. It is a superficial reason.

Historically Quakers posted prices in their shops. They gained customers who knew that they would not be taken advantage of so other shopkeepers resented these highly successful Quakers. It seems to me that every American institution has recently come to a crisis of integrity. In seems that our structures of responsibility and integrity have failed. A domino affect of accountants, CEOs, and lawyers having failed in their responsibilities to bring a great crisis of integrity. This is a live issue in our culture right now.

Integrity is a background assumption of a Quaker living faithfully even if is not called out as a
central testimony. Teaching integrity in the context of the SPICE clock was not done lightly or for superficial reasons. Integrity is a weightier word and concept than simple honesty. As a First Day school teacher, having a way to talk about integrity as a testimony is very important for today’s young people, especially in the modern school communities. What would have been perceived as cheating when I was in school is now a common way of doing business. As Quaker parents we are often challenged as other parents encourage their children in what I would call cheating. It is important to support our families by teaching integrity as a Quaker value.

- What I would like to see:
  1) Inward experience first
  2) Corporate discernment
  3) Expand testimonies under separate headings so there is a method by which someone can find what they are looking for
  4) Refer to pages where the testimony is expanded on in the advices and query section. Right now it is written as a tease without substance.

- Names section, beautiful second paragraph. It beautifully expresses the inexpressible. Discipline is an elusive word. What does it mean to Quakers? In the old version – the last paragraph on page 40. I am in awe of this paragraph and sad to see it go.

- We need a new testimony of Integrity in light of cultural change. (someone noted that it is listed in the NPYM outline)

- The biggest problem I have is that the testimony is referred to as Harmony rather than Peace. It is important to refer to the Peace Testimony. Harmony does not mean Peace. When I think of the Peace and Social Concerns Committee I cannot think of calling it the Harmony and Social Concerns Committee. I was drawn to Quakers by the Peace Testimony. We are distinctive as a Peace Church not a Harmony Church. Harmony is not a testimony to me. It is a Quality that underlies peace but it doesn’t express the paradigm change needed to achieve peace.

- The old version has no reference to harmony.

- One can adapt ideas to be harmonious in a way that does not create peace.

- Peace is not a testimony, neither is integrity. The idea of peace grows from the four testimonies of Community, Harmony, Equality and Simplicity.

- Our queries change, our testimonies change. Integrity is mentioned in the old version of Faith & Practice.

- I don’t agree about harmony/peace use. Pacifism is often the only thing people know about Quakers. Pacifism is misunderstood. The Peace Testimony is important.

- I head us say a spirit in our existing Faith & Practice is that it puts “us” as the speaker in the center. We like that when people read the Faith & Practice they are looking for something. We would like to make “us” easy to find and relative to their experience today. There are things in the proposed revision that are jarring and didn’t find familiar from the old in the new.

- As an observer from the outside I see a profound commitment to peace and harmony in the Quaker community, support for both. It is music to me to hear you wrestling with these deep and noble issues. Thank you for your labors.

- There is harmony in the struggle.