12-15 Bellingham Friends participated.

Current Faith and Practice says “responsibility for decisions remains with members of the Meeting” – however, Bellingham includes all active adult participants not only members of the Religious Society of Friends.

Friends may need more guidance about decisions taken by “sense of the meeting” and what it means to “stand in the way” or to “stand aside” during the decision-making process.

“Faith and Practice is a refuge in time of trouble” in the life of the Meeting.

**Threshing sessions**

- Important and useful ways to discuss issues free of the burden of decision-making – creates a better basis for decisions in the future. Good opportunity to vent, to get the full diversity of opinion out.
- Questions remain re: ‘where do you go after the threshing?’ – it’s helpful to have next steps defined and perhaps assigned to some person or group.
- Be careful not to make a decision at a threshing session even if it appears that unity is taking shape. Take the issue into Meeting for Business.
- Taking notes at threshing can be helpful – without names attached to comments.
- Bellingham has experience with inviting an observer from another meeting to witness (perhaps to serve as clerk or recorder) at threshing sessions.

**Experience with troubled people disrupting meeting for worship**

- The chapter should distinguish between having a mental illness and having behavioral outbursts.
- Such things are always case-specific. Hard to define how what’s enough, what’s not enough to do in dealing with them.
- Can there be suggested readings to help guide Meetings in particular circumstances?
- Important to protect the Meeting as a whole.
- Some disruptions might come from presence of government or military infiltrators (one Friend remarked “what a great opportunity!”)
- It’s good to have Faith and Practice acknowledge that mental illness with behavior outbursts can happen; don’t be afraid of mental illness, but realize that the Quaker Meeting is not a substitute for psychiatric treatment or psychotherapy by professional healers.
- F&P might want to acknowledge that sex offenders may seek to attend meetings and that there may be problems associated with that.
- Divorce can cause disruptions; meeting members shouldn’t take sides. [Theo & Debbie made a note for the F&P chapter on Marriage]

**Ministry**

- “Can be either a noun or a verb.”
Ministry is responding to a need – which may not be acknowledged yet. Ministry responds to both internal needs and external needs. Everyone in the Meeting is probably involved in some type of ministry; there are many forms; ministry is bound up with participating in the life of the meeting community.

Quaker Leadership

Bellingham Friends have a “clerk’s dinner” at least once a year, at time of committee turnover – time for vision about directions and needs in the Meeting. In the past Bellingham Friends have had a ‘convenors’ meeting’ when new committees were named.

“Gifts and Talents Committee” (=Nominating) looks for ways to offer growth opportunities. Co-clerking is a good way to provide leadership opportunities, especially with co-clerks serving staggered terms to help for smoother transitions.

“Quaker leadership doesn’t always come with a job title.” Stay aware of opportunities to share the load. Look for ways to encourage others and bring them in, but make space for people who haven’t made that decision yet, too.

Minutes

Bellingham publishes draft minutes from Meeting for Business in the newsletter. Be sure to number and date minutes; keep and index and cross-references. Having searchable documents helps. Written reports from committees in advance of Meeting for Business: there was brisk discussion about this, some said it creates a good basis for the discussion in Meeting for Business, some felt it leads to disengagement during the meeting since everyone has heard it all before; agreement that reports are important for those who don’t/can’t attend but still need to know. Be careful to distinguish between reports in Meeting for Business and discussion leading to actual decisions.