

AN OVYM PROGRAM ON INTERVISITATION

Since George Fox first undertook his journeys, intervisitation and travel in the ministry have been crucial to the health of the Society of Friends. As Brian Drayton said in conversation with the RNE committee, “intervisitation brings life and nourishment to all parts of the body. It is the blood circulating.” When there is no circulation, parts of the body become numb or fall asleep. Intervisitation by Friends can help address issues that are beyond the resources of a single meeting, offer fresh perspectives, and unite individuals with specific concerns. Some Friends may feel isolated in their local meetings and long to connect with other Quakers who are called to similar work or face similar struggles. Youth and young adults, in particular, need time for fellowship with Friends in their age groups. Local meetings face challenges, and can benefit from the experience of other meetings or their share creative solutions to a common problem. The work of the committees of OVYM needs to be more directly shared with local meetings so that we can unite with the work being done on our behalf. Intervisitation also provides a chance to nourish the leadings and gifts of individuals and monthly meetings, and to share those gifts with the entire body and the wider world.

Such ministry is not the work of one committee or a few individuals, nor does it take a single form. Intervisitation often involves traveling to attend another monthly meeting, but Quaker lifeblood flows through all the various connections we make as individuals, local meetings, and wider Quaker bodies. The Religious Nurture and Education Committee asks individual Friends, committees and monthly meetings within OVYM to consider committing to the following actions in order to foster connections within our community. The Spiritual Nurture Fund under the care of the Religious Nurture and Education Committee is available to help support intervisitation. Write to the committee if you need assistance.

We ask OVYM Friends to unite with and commit to the following practices:

Individuals

- Individual Friends commit to visiting worship or a special event at another meeting at least once each year. It is often helpful to visit along with a companion. We particularly encourage youth, young adults and newcomers to consider intervisitation. Although formal travel in the ministry under a concern requires careful discernment, anyone can make an informal visit to another meeting.

Individuals are also encouraged to read the Quill and otherwise keep informed about what is happening within the Yearly Meeting and local meetings, and follow up by reaching out to Friends whose work they find interesting. Friends are also encouraged to consider how they might build relationships and find time for informal worship within their meetings, beyond First Day worship.

Monthly Meetings

- Monthly Meetings commit to making a connection to at least one other meeting in the Yearly Meeting at least once during the year.

Possible activities which two meetings might share include coming together for worship, combining youth activities, co-hosting public events, joint retreats, or bringing a speaker to the area. Some meetings are already making such connections, and are encouraged to develop more. The Religious Nurture and Education Committee can help make these connections and identify resource people. Friends are encouraged to plan events that include younger Friends.

- Monthly Meetings commit to sending representatives to Executive Committee and Quarterly Meeting.

Although this has been our practice, attendance has declined at both.

Quarterly Meetings

- Quarterly Meetings commit to sending a representative to the other Quarterly Meeting and developing a plan to foster intervisitation and deepen connections within the Quarter. The Religious Nurture and Education Committee is available to help plan events and build relationships. The Quarters can encourage the connections between meetings outlined above, or might host an event for a specific group, such as First Day School teachers or Friends interested in a particular social issue.

OVYM Committees and Entities

- OVYM committees commit to developing a strategy to directly share their work with the monthly meetings.

Such sharing might take various forms, including naming a liaison to each Monthly Meeting, offering a formal program or discussions at local meetings, writing about the work of the committee in the Quill or on the OVYM website, visiting local meetings, creating an online discussion, or holding meetings on Sundays at different local meetings. Friends are encouraged to consider how to engage younger Friends in this work.

- OVYM committees commit to developing a strategy to make committee work more accessible to Friends on margins of the OVYM geographical area.

Too often committees meet in the same area of the Yearly Meeting, and Friends within Whitewater Quarter, in particular, find it difficult to serve. Committees are encouraged to move the location of committee meetings around the Yearly Meeting, which also offers an opportunity for intervisitation. The use of online meeting software may also be a way to allow more participation, and is being discussed by executive committee.

Religious Nurture and Education:

- In addition to the above, the Religious Nurture and Education committee commits to further exploration of ways to make connections between Friends. In particular, we would like to develop retreats or other structures, such as online communities, to connect Friends who share particular concerns (such as parenting) or who serve particular roles (such as clerks or treasurers). We also hope to invite some young adult Friends from outside the Yearly Meeting to travel among us.

At sessions this year, we will be asking Friends to consider what kinds of connection and support you long for, as an individual and as a member of a local meeting. We also want to

know what your meeting is doing that excites you, which might be shared with other meetings.

- The Religious Nurture and Education committee is developing a page on the OVYM website to help connect Friends to resources on First Day School, outreach, and nurture of meetings, which may be helpful to monthly meetings. We commit to further development over the summer. We particularly recommend the FGC Spiritual Deepening Program and the Friendly Play curriculum to Friends.

Please let the Religious Nurture and Education Committee know about your successes and challenges in undertaking the actions we have recommended.