

Meetings for Discernment Steering Committee
Report to Spring Sessions 2013

The Winter 2013 Sessions were held at Brooklyn Monthly Meeting on March 2, 2013. About 70 friends attended and in deep worship considered morning queries which focused on monthly meetings (“What are your dreams, yearnings, and hopes for your meeting? What is God calling your meeting to become?”) and afternoon queries focusing on the Yearly Meeting (“What are your hopes, leadings, and expectations for our yearly meeting as a gathered body? What work is God calling us to do together that we cannot do separately?”). Approximately 40 friends attended a follow-up evening meeting for reflection, especially about the experience of eldering during the meetings. Four friends served as note takers and about 20 elders shared the service of holding the meetings in prayer. A full report will be posted on the Yearly Meeting website in the not-too-distant future, but a small taste of some of the ministry follows here: We were encouraged to reach for divinely inspired solutions that do not resemble the problems, to listen and respond to each other in love, and to let the great gift we have been given shine. The impact of Hurricane Sandy is still being felt and response to the hurricane diverted some meetings from other good works. A continued tension around doing the work to keep meetings going and doing work in the world was felt. Occupy Wall Street was seen as an important witness for society as a whole as well as for meetings and individuals. Relationships with the schools under our care can be problematic, there is an urgent need for more support for prison worship groups, and there is deep concern for our planet. Some spoke of a deepening prayer life in their meetings, among other things around FUM’s 40 Days of Prayer and Rex Ambler’s Light Groups. Please watch for more details in the full report.

In addition to its work to plan and facilitate the meetings, the Meetings for Discernment Steering Committee is also considering the role of Meetings for Discernment in the structure of the Yearly Meeting. We have formulated some questions to help us. Among the questions we are asking ourselves and may in some form ask the YM as a whole during the next year are:

1. How do Meetings for Discernment feed individuals and meetings within the YM, even if not all participate in them?
2. What happens with the information we hear from one another in Meetings for Discernment, and how do we know what happens to the information?
3. How, and how well, do the queries we raise and the ministry at Meetings for Discernment elicit and convey the concerns and condition of the YM?
4. Does the work of the Priorities Working Group (which is expected to be laid down in July 2014) shed light on what the YM needs from Meetings for Discernment? (The Meetings for Discernment Steering Committee has begun to work with the Priorities Working Group on this question.)
5. What are Meetings for Discernment teaching us about eldering?
6. What are other ways we can envision meeting the needs that Meetings for Discernment currently meet?

The steering committee continues to meet to discern way forward and welcomes input as well as new members.

Lucinda Antrim, Clerk, Steering Committee, Meetings for Discernment