

Report—Priorities Working Group

Keeping Faith: Answering That of God in All Creation

Summer Sessions 2013 — July 21–27, Silver Bay, New York

Report of the Priorities Working Group

Since Spring Sessions, the Priorities Working Group has continued visiting monthly meetings. We have visited Collins, Flushing, Philipstown, Easton, Brooklyn, Purchase, Wilton, and Genesee Valley. For each visit, two or more members of the Priorities Working Group are present with members of the local meeting. Our queries to them are the same you have heard before: First, How is the Spirit alive in your Monthly Meeting? Second, What work, ministry, witness is your Meeting called to? And third, How can the rest of the Yearly Meeting support you in that life? After each visit, we send a report back to the local meeting for any corrections; then it is filed in our cumulative folder. In coming months, we plan to begin digesting the visit reports. From them we'll make our first draft of the Statement of Leadings and Priorities, which we were charged to produce when we were formed. At Spring Sessions I reported to you some of the concerns that have emerged: Friends' commitment to the spiritual community of their local Meeting; the desire for greater contact among local meetings and around the Yearly Meeting; help with property matters and religious education; and the hope that New York Yearly Meeting would become more of a visible presence for spirit-led change in the world.

One important question, which has been before the Priorities Working Group from the beginning, concerns the Yearly Meeting's budgeting process. The question is, How can the concerns and leadings that meetings have expressed to us be recognized early enough to identify their priorities and direct the budget process? As a first step, members of our group have spent much time and effort in drafting both a consolidated statement of the Yearly Meeting's income and another consolidated statement of its expenses. These statements will show not only the operating budget, but also the funds managed by the Yearly Meeting treasurer, and the funds managed by the Yearly Meeting's trustees. The result will show that our activities, measured by dollars, are almost twice as robust as the operating budget alone would indicate. As we continue developing these statements, we expect to present a more detailed report at Fall Sessions, with sample copies of the documents.

A statement of income and expenses is not an end in itself. The Priorities Working Group views this consolidated financial presentation as one of the leadings or priorities we ultimately recommend to the Yearly Meeting body. The broad financial picture reflected in a consolidated income report will illustrate the priorities under which we currently labor; it will allow discernment on the extent to which the Yearly Meeting's activities serve the leadings of the monthly meetings. It responds to the advice that Friends should "inspect frequently the state of their temporal affairs." Knowing accurately our programs and activities, as measured by our income and expenses, will help the Financial Services Committee and other

Friends to develop a budget that reflects the priorities of the Yearly Meeting.

At a recent meeting we set out our visit schedule for the rest of 2013. We anticipate completing our visits this year. Service on the Priorities Working Group continues to be a blessing for all its members.

Lee Haring, Clerk