

Report on the Meeting Visitation Initiative

I'd like to speak to you today about a visitation initiative I first suggested at Spring Sessions in Rochester. I'm happy to report that so far this year 63 Friends from 26 different meetings and worship groups have visited 43 other meetings and worship groups. Some Friends have visited more than one meeting. Some meetings have received more than one visit.

Let me say something about the "who," "what," "when," and "how" of this initiative.

First, who? The "who" is you.

What? That would be visiting MMs and WGs in the YM.

When? During their regularly scheduled meeting for worship.

Where? Wherever you can, close by or far away.

How? By setting you mind to it and doing it.

By traveling with a Friend.

By appointing a time for yourself such as the 5th Sunday of any month that has one.

Or by following an impulse.

And by sharing ideas and encouraging other Friends.

And now, **WHY?**

If we yearn to be a little more in this world as Friends, we need to stretch a little. If we believe the experience of living in the Spirit is carried most strongly in the individual experience and witness and ministry of Friends, then visiting among our meetings is important.

Friends, we claim to not be hierarchical, but I believe when we remain fixed on place in our local meetings we actually create hierarchy. We call ourselves a society. Let's suppose instead of monthly meetings we were actually a collection of towns spread throughout a region.

In this region there is a capitol. And we travel to and from our town to assemble in the capitol. But we never travel to the next town, or visit other towns in the region. We look to the capitol to fill needs our town cannot manage. But we do not build relationships directly between our towns. Instead of a rich network of interrelationships, we each look in one direction, to the capitol. Instead of an economy based on local exchange of talents, ideas and resources we have a more limited, hierarchical and centralized system.

Now the image of the capitol represents one aspect of our Yearly Meeting. It's the central YM organization and our gathered sessions. Some Friends think that's all the YM is. But the YM is

also those interconnections that I spoke of. And that network needs some care if we are to live into who we want to be as a society.

Let me repeat something I said earlier... If we believe the experience of living in the Spirit is carried most strongly in the individual witness and ministry of Friends, rather central organization and hierarchy, then visiting among our meetings is important to our Spiritual vitality and well-being.

I'm happy to report that Friends are beginning to get under the weight of this. **Since the start of the year, we've recorded 145 visits in our YM.**

Friends may have seen a display in the display area yesterday with information on how to record a visit, and how to see what visiting has taken place. I've managed to set that display up again this morning if you didn't have a chance to see it yesterday. Also, I'm available to anyone as a resource if you would like to get under the weight of this. **And I'd like to offer a Friendly challenge, which is that I believe we can record 500 visits altogether by the time of next summer sessions.** We're nearly a third of the way there already.

Numbers aside, visiting among Friends promises to become a gift that keeps giving. So I ask that we encourage and support one another in the practice.

Friends wishing to receive information on the visitation initiative and how to record a visit online can email me at clerk@nyym.org. If you have made a visit and do not want to record it yourself, you can send me the information (your name, your meeting, the meeting visited, and the date of the visit, plus any comments you want recorded) by email, or in the care of the Yearly Meeting office at 15 Rutherford Place, NY, NY 10003.

Over the past year I have heard reports of several programs taking place between pairs of monthly meetings, organized within quarters and regions, and sponsored by Yearly Meeting committees. I enthusiastically commend and encourage these programs, and efforts of a similar nature that Friends may be led to undertake.

See more at <http://www.nyym.org/?q=MeetingVisitationInitiative>

Jeff Hitchcock

Clerk, NYYM