

NYYM/NEYM Pastor's Retreat Notes
March 2014—Powell House

Responses to the question: "What is the purpose of our Meeting/Why do we exist?"

- Create a community to look at our lives
- Align ourselves with the ways of Jesus
- Gather for worship
- Help seekers/create a welcoming space
- Self discipline
- Create a loving community
- Establish support for faithful lives
- Be a witness
- Become a vehicle/outlet for God's gifts to find expression in the world
- To find the Way
- To get Home

M&C/Elder Responses to Queries

1. How can we better nurture ourselves, our own growth and effectiveness in ministry?
 - Pay attention to ourselves and our own needs
 - Find out what nurtures us spiritually and do it—encourage each other in this
 - Practice active listening with each other and actively love one another
 - Establish clear goals for our committee and carry out an evaluation of our progress
 - Name the gifts present in the group. Look for intentional ways to release these gifts in a way that helps us best carryout our work
2. What might we do to better support our partners in ministry?
 - Make ourselves more available to the pastor
 - Take initiative to check in on them on a personal level
 - Create regular ways to check in on the person's well-being
 - Ask the question "how can we help you with your work" and/or "what can we do to carry out our shared work and relieve responsibilities from you?"
 - Work collaboratively to discern priorities for the pastor's work that align with needs of the Meeting and the available time/energy.
 - Help the pastor set clear personal boundaries—and work to communicate these clearly to the entire meeting
 - Be realistic and honest with the pastor
3. What might we need from our partner to makes this work more joyful and fruitful?
 - Work together—to establish mutually agreed upon goals and collaborate in honestly evaluating progress
 - Be willing to lay down what no longer needs carrying or what we do not have energy/resources to continue
 - Be honest about your needs and boundaries

Pastor Responses to Queries

1. How can we better nurture ourselves, our own growth and effectiveness in ministry?
 - Pay closer attention to ourselves/needs, the time of the year, sense of rhythm, actual time worked. If helpful, log our hours for our own accountability
 - Create a time during Yearly Meeting sessions to meet together
 - Commit to taking regular/consistent time off—communicate it to the Meeting
 - Set clear boundaries, agreed upon by the M&C, that our shared with whole Meeting
 - Create avenues for mutual accountability and support among—phone calls, Facebook page, mentors, links with retired ministers, share ministry resources/ideas with each other
 - Take advantage of the Powell House retreat weekend offer

2. What might we do to better support our partners in ministry?
 - Invite members of the M&C to retreats like this—to build relationship and shared understanding
 - Work to develop a yoked-sense of leadership between pastor & M&C for the Meeting
 - Make it a priority to clarify shared goals for the Meeting and set clear responsibilities for how to operationalize it
 - Commit to not over-function—do not do what others can do
 - Provide education/instruction around the role of pastor, elder, M&C
 - Be honest and specific about personal needs

3. What might we need from our partner to makes this work more joyful and fruitful?
 - We need to be trusted
 - We need clarity around expectations, shared direction and priorities
 - We need M&C members to stretch...to try new ministries, to take leadership, to have courage and risk
 - We want M&C members to be fully-engaged...to learn how to dance together as partners in this work...to push back against us and be willing for us to push against you for the sake of the church
 - To work on issues of history and culture that are part of our community

Issues needing further exploration:

- What resources exist for building a sense of teamwork?
- What resources exist for discerning gifts?
- Who are resource people who can help Meetings or Quarterly Meetings do discernment work around vision/direction?
- What resources exist for developing a high-functioning Nominating Committee?
- What resources exist for training greeters, new-comer welcoming committees?

Next Steps:

1. Anne P., Noah and Colin will consolidate notes from the retreat. These notes, along with handouts and other materials will be sent to those who attended, M&C clerks and monthly meeting clerks for pastoral meetings in NYYM & NEYM.
2. Ruth Ann, Kathleen and Ann D-C will work on drafting an epistle that captures the spirit of this gathering. If finished, this will be forwarded on to both Yearly Meetings
3. Meetings will work on creating job descriptions/expectations for the M&C group.
4. Meetings will review and update their pastor's job description in light of their Meeting's mission and goals.
5. Yearly Meeting leadership will look at planning a retreat focused on the role of M&C for local Meetings.
6. Retreat participants will go home and share what they have learned with other members of their M&C and wider Meeting.
7. NEYM may form a task group around better supporting pastoral meetings to keep this concern active
8. Yearly Meeting leaders will make sure there is follow-up at this retreat next year to find out how progress is being made around:
 - a. Developing an authentic sense of partnership
 - b. Growing in fruitfulness and joy
 - c. Other commitments arising out of our discussion
9. Retreat planners will re-extend an invitation to pastoral Meetings that do not have a pastor to send an M&C representative to this retreat anyway.
10. Retreat planners will communicate next year's retreat dates to pastors, M&C clerks and Meeting clerks for all pastoral meetings as soon as possible

Ways our Yearly Meetings and FUM can better support pastoral ministry and programmed meetings:

- Provide useful, updated and accessible resources online
- Create a facilitator/resource person list to help on a local level
- COMMUNICATE—regularly and through a variety of means about what is going on and about resources/opportunities being offered
- As resources are added to website, communicate updates in other ways so people will notice
- Develop targeted/focused communication for programmed meetings/pastoral ministers
- Consider a video conferencing opportunity to link NYYM/NEYM pastors
- Host a conference in which programmed and unprogrammed come together to learn about each other's strengths, weaknesses, challenges
- Increase visitation to these Meetings
- Share the story of programmed NEYM/NYYM stories within the wider Yearly Meetings
- Encourage programmed meetings to reach out to each other and encouragement involvement in Yearly Meeting/FUM gatherings
- Devote an issue of the "Spark" to pastoral meetings in NYYM
- Develop sister church relationships
 - Between NYYM and NEYM pastoral meetings
 - Between programmed and unprogrammed meetings in their own Yearly Meetings
- Create a pulpit supply list and pastoral candidate list
- Develop a fund pastoral sabbatical assistance

Tensions within the pastoral tradition of Friends

- Leadership is intended to be in partnership under the direction of Christ's Spirit
- There is often an awkward dance between pastors, M&C and the Meeting in several ways
 - Pastors do not have a "better than" role but it is a unique role in the life of the Meeting
 - Paradoxically calling to both serve AND lead—at the same time
 - They are members of community...but also accountable to the community in ways others are not
 - Hired/fired
 - We say we are not hiring them to be the minister...and we expect ministerial duties to be performed
 - We pay/release them for their service (which is good and helpful) and it complicates relationships
 - Their role is in part defined by their job description (to meet needs of church) & by their own call/gifts
 - The pastor is called both to comfort and disturb
 - Shepherding love, care, comfort in crisis, call out gifts
 - Spur on to faithfulness, service, growth, accountability, prophetic
 - Members of the congregation often prefer one of these
 - There are competing expectations and perceptions around pastors
 - We expect them to always be available...but there is often a sense of "what do they really do?"
 - We expect them to be highly trained & educated...but we provide very low wages (Quakers on the bottom end of denominational salary scales)
 - We expect them to be fully invested and committed to the community...but the person's call may not (and may be should not?) necessarily be for life.
 - Many people want to be friends with the pastor...
 - But how open/honest can the pastor really be? Is a pastor really free to talk honestly/openly about their needs?
 - But they need to be careful not to have "favorites."
 - But the person is too busy/spread so relationally thin to be able to cultivate deep friendships. Ministry needs often determine who the person spends time with.
 - But members are often less open to being friends than they think...
 - Truth is many pastors feel lonely... have few close friends in church.
 - Pastors sometimes feel it is hard to ask people for care/support...when they are expected to provide it.

Issues common to Pastors that complicate the relationship:

- Idealism/wish dream—unrealistic sense of what is possible that can easily breed cynicism
- Inability or unwillingness to set personal boundaries (in role of always unfinished tasks & high expectations by others, multiplicity of roles)
- Workaholicism
- Messianic complex
- Confusion of role identity with self-image (my whole life/identity is about being a pastor)

- Impatience with change. When coupled with intangible nature of work it becomes difficult to see/notice the changes actually taking place.
- Unrealistic sense of responsibility/power. “Everything depends on me.” “if I do just a little bit more...”
- Take things personally—people leaving, family crises, church finances, etc.

Quaker peculiarities that complicate effective leadership and authentic partnership

- We tend to be ambivalent about leadership. Some friends resist the expression of leadership gifts/actions because they fear it, what everyone to be “equal”, will not trust others to exercise their gifts on behalf of the community, equate power as always being used “over” others rather than recognizing it can be used “for” or “in service of” others
- We are often not skilled in “followership”—we don’t know how to follow others well
- Too often we will not give people the “authority” to carry out the “responsibility” we may give
- We can be conflict avoidant
- We are sloppy—we don’t do the hard and careful work of establishing systems, structures, being clear, evaluating, etc...because we don’t think it will be a problem and/or we want to be more “spirit-led” than structured. Our sloppiness bites us regularly, however.

Statistics about pastors from a Barna/Fuller Institute poll (data is a couple of years old now)

- 90% of the pastors report working between 55 to 75 hours per week.
- 80% believe pastoral ministry has negatively affected their families. Many pastor's children do not attend church now because of what the church has done to their parents.
- 33% state that being in the ministry is an outright hazard to their family.
- 75% report significant stress-related crisis at least once in their ministry.
- 90% feel they are inadequately trained to cope with the ministry demands.
- 50% feel unable to meet the demands of the job.
- 70% say they have a lower self-image now than when they first started.
- 70% do not have someone they consider a close friend.
- 40% report serious conflict with a parishioner at least once a month.
- 33% confess having involved in inappropriate sexual behavior with someone in the church.
- 50% have considered leaving the ministry in the last months.
- 50% of the ministers starting out will not last 5 years.
- 1 out of every 10 ministers will actually retire as a minister in some form.
- 94% of clergy families feel the pressures of the pastor's ministry.
- 66% of church members expect a minister and family to live at a higher moral standard than themselves.
- The profession of "Pastor" is near the bottom of a survey of the most-respected professions, just above "car salesman".
- Over 4,000 churches closed in America last year.
- Over 1,700 pastors left the ministry every month last year.
- Over 1,300 pastors were terminated by the local church each month, many without cause.
- Over 3,500 people a day left the church last year.
- #1 reason pastors leave the ministry — Church and pastors are not going the same direction and goal do not have shared goals. Sometimes the frustration is around who gets to decide direction, but for many it arises out of unwillingness to create a clear mission/vision for the community and join together in partnership to fulfill it.