

## Report on the Meetings for Discernment 2019

Meetings for Discernment were held twice in 2019, at Poughkeepsie Meeting on February 23rd and at Silver Bay during Yearly Meeting Sessions on July 23rd.

There were two notable changes in these meetings from others in recent years. The first is that more young adult Friends than usual attended these meetings. The second is that the query for the summer meeting addressed a matter that is currently under consideration for action by the Yearly Meeting. And these two changes are connected.

Our February meeting was held on a Saturday and the organizers of the Young Adult Spiritual Nurture Series arranged to hold one of their workshops at Poughkeepsie Meeting the following day. This made it easy and inviting for young adults coming to the workshop to come for Discernment as well, enriching the worship and fellowship on Saturday.

The summer meeting centered on the query “what does membership mean to you?” This is directly related to the proposal now under consideration by the Yearly Meeting to create an additional pathway to membership. We have not previously attempted to labor over a specific issue through the Meetings for Discernment process, but the Steering Committee agreed that it was appropriate to do so at this point in our development. And, while the proposed new pathway would not solely apply to younger Friends, the suggestion originated with concerned young adults for whom membership through a monthly meeting is not readily achieved. Knowing that we may each have a different portion of the Light, our discernment together was deep and open. Some reported that they understood the feelings and needs of others when before they had not been able to and some reported feeling heard when before they felt excluded. Though the Yearly Meeting is yet to come to unity on some questions of membership, the Meeting for Discernment was an opportunity, well-used, to listen, to speak, and to open to one another. We hope to continue exploring how these Meetings can have spirit-led practical uses for the Yearly Meeting.

Beyond the timing and topics of the Meetings, this year the Steering Committee made a greater effort to reach out, for clerks, to Friends who had not been called on before to clerk a session and whose gifts could become more widely known and appreciated by their clerking such a session. We learned (again) how this kind of recognition lifts up the individuals and the Meeting as a whole. We will continue to hold this as one of our objectives in seeking Friends to clerk Meeting for Discernment sessions.

Finally, we note that a minute approved in 2014 (2014-07-24) reads in part that “...Friends approve the extension of Meetings for Discernment for an additional six years, at the end of which Friends will consider how and whether Meetings for Discernment are serving Spirit’s purpose for New York Yearly Meeting... .” As the Steering Committee considers this over the coming months, we welcome any insights or concerns Friends may wish to share with us, and we anticipate bringing a recommendation on the future of the Meetings for Discernment to the Yearly Meeting body no later than Summer Sessions 2020.

Respectfully presented,

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For the Meetings for Discernment Steering Committee