

WHAT: Report to NYYM Fall Sessions, November 9-11, 2018

FROM: The Outreach Working Group and the NYYM Outreach Discernment and Planning Meeting of Oct 6-7, 2018

PURPOSE: To inform Friends of recent developments in generating a strategic Outreach Action Plan for NYYM for the next three years, 2019-2021

Background

Over the past two years, there have been several reports coming to this gathering of Friends from the Outreach Working Group. What we are sharing with you now is a brief, summary report from the OWG, but **primarily it is a report coming from a new, emerging structure** that is being put in place to take outreach in NYYM to a new level.

The OWG was formed in early 2016 with the charge to nurture and encourage the energy for outreach in the Yearly Meeting. Its work has ranged from developing outreach resources to grantmaking for outreach projects, but its primary focus has been on assisting monthly meetings in their outreach efforts through the formation of a learning circle called the Outreach Practitioners Circle. At various times up to eighteen meetings have been involved in OPC work, meetings as distant from each other as Buffalo and Conscience Bay, all engaged in learning how to help their meetings be more effective in outreach. At the same time, there were some powerful outreach initiatives being conducted by other Friends; for example Emily Provance's social media training and Melinda Wenner Bradley's hands-on assistance through the Monthly Meeting Partners Project. **But the simple fact remained that the Yearly Meeting, including the vast majority of monthly meetings, was not engaging in outreach learning in any coordinated or intentional way and significant opportunities were being missed.**

Major Task

As the OWG approached its 2018 sunset date, it saw as one of its major tasks a necessity to address this deficit. It requested and received from Yearly Meeting a budget to support a strategic planning process aimed at generating an outreach action plan for the entire Yearly Meeting. Such an outreach plan would elevate the understanding and effective practice of outreach at every level of organization and activity in NYYM, and bring more intentionality and coordination to the Yearly Meeting's outreach efforts.

The Process: Assess--digest--discern

First we needed to assess the status of outreach in the Yearly Meeting and listen to the thoughts and aspirations of Friends regarding outreach. Using the skills of a consultant experienced in collecting and evaluating qualitative and quantitative data, between May and July of this year, focus groups and one-on-one interviews were conducted and a questionnaire distributed to gain the input of Friends. This information was collated, digested and released in the form of a sixty-page report "Outreach Within New York Yearly Meeting: A Report to Inform Discernment and Planning, Summer 2018."

In early October, a diverse body of twenty-four Friends from around the Yearly Meeting, each having read the Report and carrying a concern for some aspect of outreach, gathered at Chatham-Summit Meeting over the weekend of October 6-7 for a facilitated discussion to discern way forward with the objective of creating the broad outlines of an Outreach Action Plan for 2019-2021.

Several primary themes emerged from the assessment conducted this summer and, subsequently, from the rich discussion at the October discernment gathering. These themes shaped the outreach plan that is emerging.

- One primary theme is that inreach and continuing spiritual growth as well as continued focus on inclusivity and diversity must be the foundation on which effective outreach is built.
- Secondly, Friends said that outreach is frequently hindered, not only by a reluctance to appear to be proselytizing, but also because the theological diversity among Friends hampers making clear and confident statements about who Quakers are.

- Friends also said that they feel undermined in their outreach efforts by the general lack of awareness about the work of Quakers -- or even their existence. It is hard, they say, to get traction for outreach activities when there is so little cultural awareness of Quakerism.
- Finally, another key theme was that, while there are many examples of creative and energetic outreach activities, monthly meetings report that they do not have the skills, personnel, or resources to conduct effective, ongoing outreach. Monthly meetings are asking for more assistance in planning and implementing outreach.

Where We Are Now: Strategic Priorities and Implementation Planning

Building on these themes and coming out of that weekend of discernment, Yearly Meeting now has the outline of a three-year outreach action plan built around four strategic priorities. The discerned priorities are as follows:

Strategic Priority #1: [Nurturing a Spirit-infused Culture as Foundational to Outreach](#)

Foster a Spirit-infused culture that normalizes and supports bold faithfulness within a framework of radical inclusivity

Strategic Priority #2: [Communicating Who We Are](#)

Build our capacity to communicate and act in a way that acknowledges and embraces the breadth of who we are and who we will become

Strategic Priority #3: [Increasing Awareness of Quakerism](#)

Create greater awareness of Quakerism in the New York Yearly Meeting geographic area

Strategic Priority #4: [Building Monthly Meetings' Outreach Capacity](#)

Build the capacity of monthly meetings in NYYM to do effective outreach

Priorities need to be supported by implementation plans, and so the planning group that met in October also identified five implementation priorities to support the strategic areas:

1. Steering Circle

Establish an Outreach Steering Circle to coordinate, evaluate, and monitor the implementation of this Outreach Plan for 2019-2021

2. Outreach Coaches

Develop a cohort of coaches to take forward implementation of these strategic priorities through work with monthly meetings

3. Repository of Outreach Resources

Create a searchable, sortable, curated, online repository of outreach tools, practices, and other resources

4. Story-Telling Network

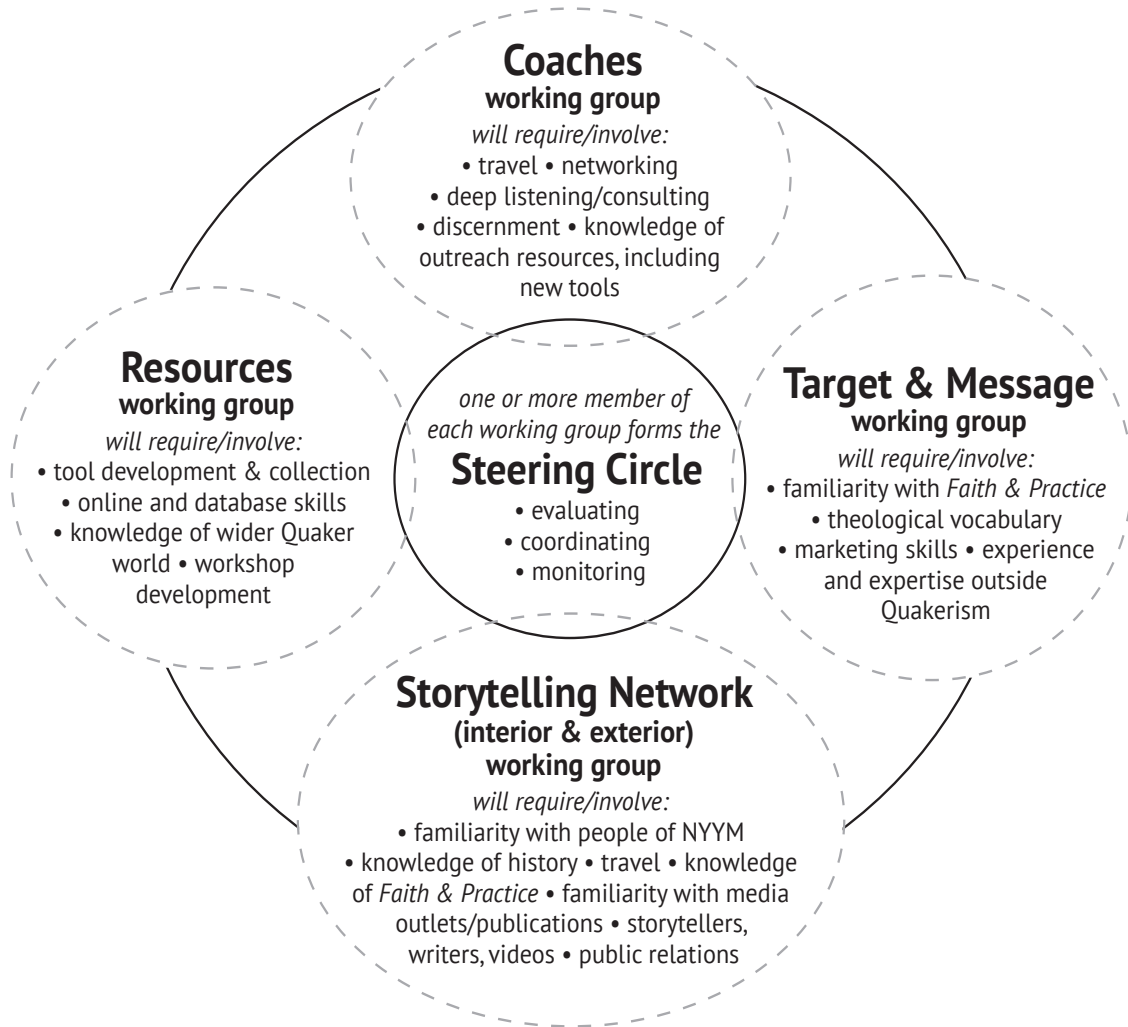
Establish a storytelling and communications network connected with other elements of the Plan, that identifies and amplifies stories of bold faithfulness to the Divine among Friends, as a means of powerful inreach and outreach

5. Build Awareness of Quakers: Targeting and Messaging

Identify and mobilize people with marketing, graphic design, and publication expertise and secure a budget for research and marketing; explore and establish a network for collaboration across participating Quaker organizations

Implementation

Friends also defined a structure for implementation. That structure is shown below. It includes a Steering Circle to be composed of a representation of Friends working in each of the Strategic Priority areas. They will be charged with coordinating, monitoring and evaluating the implementation of the Outreach Action Plan for 2019-2021.



PROPOSED OUTREACH ACTION PLAN IMPLEMENTATION STRUCTURE

Next Steps

The next step in bringing this plan to life is to take the proposal to the Coordinating Committee Weekend in January, where we anticipate there will be further discernment about the content and shape of a final Action Plan, to be presented at Spring Sessions in 2019. As it stands now, accomplishing key parts of the Plan will depend, ultimately, on the financial support of the Yearly Meeting.

With the faithful support of many Friends, **NYYM has taken a bold step forward with the generation of this Plan.** As expressed by individual Friends repeatedly and increasingly over the years, stated clearly and unequivocally in our 2014 Statement of Leadings and Priorities, and reinforced by Friends in the NYYM Outreach Report generated within these past six months, NYYM Friends have been looking for a more informed, effective way to reach out and offer the Quaker path to seekers. We now have the makings of a plan to address some of those needs in a more thoughtful, comprehensive, and effective way.

We trust that Friends will receive this report with open hearts and minds, that you will lift up the measure of Light that it contains by supporting the Outreach Action Plan however you feel led, and that you will offer Friends entrusted with implementation of the Plan counsel along the way so that the it stays on track and firmly grounded in our Quaker faith and tradition.