

NPYM CONSULTATION CALL - MAY 15, 2019

"EXPLORING EXPECTANT WORSHIP AND VOCAL MINISTRY"

This was the second of the scheduled Consultation Calls for 2018-19. The facilitator was Melody Ashworth. Six Monthly Meetings were represented: South Mountain, Pullman-Moscow, Eugene, University, Tacoma, and Sandpoint. After a period of silent worship, we addressed the four queries which had been designated for this conversation.

1. What has helped your meeting prepare for expectant worship?

The ceiling of one Meetings' worship room collapsed during the previous week. The Meeting, undeterred, has been meeting for worship in the Meetings' kitchen area. This dramatic change has Friends sensing that Spirit feels closer.

Another Meeting asks Friends to arrive about 10 minutes early to Meeting in order to center in, so they are ready to go.

One Meeting has a sign on their door to remind Friends to "enter in mindfulness". Also, at times, a reminder is needed that "Meeting has started."

Other Meetings have found that the use of "Greeters" at the door to the Meeting Room helps to quiet people as they enter. They can also place gentle reminders to "silence your cell phone".

2. When your meeting feels the presence of the Spirit in silent worship and vocal ministry, what conditions have contributed to that experience?

It is felt best when it arises naturally. Sometimes, when using a query, the first person to speak gives voice to Spirit.

"When we have done something, this brings a feeling of coming together."

One Meeting has its weekly worship in a senior living facility. The presence of the residents outside in the lobby is felt; sometimes this helps, sometimes it is a distraction, but it is still possible to feel Spirit here.

A Meeting has shifted its Meeting for Business to before Worship. At times, this will enhance and contribute to the quality of worship after.

For one Meeting, profound feelings of Spirit and a "gathered meeting" are sensed at times of loss (death or memorial). At other times, some particular query or reading at the beginning of Meeting will evoke more vocal ministry than usual.

3. Have members of your meeting ever perceived problems or shortcomings in the meetings' silent worship and ministry? How, if at all, did the meeting respond to those perceived problems or shortcomings?

Sometimes, even small changes can upset people attending Meeting: a change in schedule, seating, room arrangements, etc. Whether temporary or long-term, efforts can be made to limit the impact when people express discomfort. In one Meeting, a Friend expressed dismay when flowers were not used. They had been moved to another location.

In one Meeting, a person has been coming to Ministry and Counsel committee meetings and causing problems. They are planning a second hour discussion to address the issue of "how do we handle problems?"

One Meetings' Ministry and Counsel committee discusses issues at their meetings. They have found that people seem to feel comfortable about coming to them about various problems.

If the problem arises from an individual, someone can elder them.

In one Meeting, an attender said that " when people speak, it interrupts her meditation". That one person and statement affected the Meeting for over a year, and no one spoke out of worship. She no longer attends.

People are pretty tolerant of others realizing that people come from different backgrounds.

Look at patterns of behavior, rather than specific instances. Does this happen all the time, or just occasionally? Try to be aware of a particular persons' ministry , noting if it is problematic all the time.

In one Meeting, a person spoke early and frequently. The Ministry and Counsel committee considered and approached her with guidelines about speaking. This made a difference, and she admitted her pattern. Patience in speaking can work.

4. What has helped children to understand and participate during their time with adults in worship?

Age of the children makes a difference, so that is a determining factor.

One Meeting has a lot of children, who join meeting for the last 10 minutes. The children share what they did in First Day School.

A few Meetings experimented with intergenerational worship with various success. Sometimes providing some quiet toys and activities for the children was helpful.

It was noted that historically, children attended worship with adults, but that culture has changed dramatically. Sometimes it is the adults who are not respectful of the children.

Some Friends remembered what it was like as a young Quaker child. One recalled the first time she was able to sit all the way through Meeting. Another remembered learning to sit quietly while the mind was busy. We need to be tolerant of "wiggles". One group of Young Adult parents started a worship group to include children.

Closing Worship