

Introducing a New NPYM Traveling Visitor Program: Knitting Us Together

NPYM Outreach & Visitation Committee April 2016

(honoring Anna and Howard Brinton who knit western Quakers together in the early/mid-1900s)

Purpose:

To serve the dispersed and diverse NPYM Quaker community—meetings, worship groups, and individuals—with formal opportunities for visiting and being visited, to expand on our informal visitation that currently takes place. Visitation among NPYM Friends in our vast and diverse region can foster a sense of cohesion by:

- Sharing on topics of interest
- Focusing on topics of concern
- Offering of spiritual gifts or personal skills
- Providing a discussion of Quakerism and our testimonies
- Offering a format for religious education
- Inviting neighboring meetings to collaborate

A very wide menu of options is possible.

Process:

A sub-committee of O&V, including other interested individuals, will:

- Receive applications from those who would like to travel
- Reach out to ask individuals to travel
- Identify the region to receive visitation
- Select the applicant from those applying
- Find one or more traveling elders to accompany the visitor
- Arrange the visit dates and itinerary with meetings and individuals
- Monitor the progress of the visits
- Receive receipts for reimbursement and the visitors' final reports

O&V committee itself will coordinate the entire visitation program by:

- Soliciting input about desired visitation and topics
- Prioritizing regions needing or wanting visits
- Overseeing the frequency of visits according to our budget (currently \$1500)
- Distributing applications and information about an upcoming travel opportunity
- Establishing the sub-committee
- Approving expenditures
- Receiving and distributing visitors' reports

Criteria for selecting visitors:

The application form will inform the sub-committee of a visitor's interests and capabilities. These will be matched against topics, interests, and needs known to O&V. A visitor's interest in visitation should come from a spiritual base, a leading, and with the support of their meeting or Friends who know them. Dates of availability to travel will be a factor. We seek visitors who have a focused topic or skill to offer. A visitor shall be flexible, responsive to the spiritual needs of those visited, able to react to change and to "be on their toes." The accompanying elder Friend has a vital support role, both as intermediary and spiritual advisor---see the separate description of the elder's responsibilities. Accountability to the O&V committee and NPYM is expected, along with a final written report.

These factors listed below are NOT factors for consideration of selection as a Traveling Visitor:

- Ability to fund the travel (O&V has funds for this project, although those visited may contribute financial support)
- Whether the visitor is a new or seasoned Friend (both have valuable gifts!)
- If there are "special needs" (we would hope to accommodate physical, dietary, and other requirements)

Lack of visiting experience is not a disqualifying factor! Everyone agrees that both the visitors and the visited grow from the experience.

Expectations of the hosts:

We recommend that you read the NPYM pamphlet "Thoughts for the Visitors and Visited," available on the yearly meeting website at NPYM.org or in your meeting library.

Host meetings or individuals are asked to provide hospitality—food and lodging—for both the visitor and the accompanying elder, as needed. The hosts are expected to provide the structure for the visit, after consultation with the visitor. The structure is often an hour to an hour and one-half program and a potluck in a meeting house or home. The hosts may contribute funds to supplement the O&V travel budget, in a suggested amount of \$50 or as is possible. They may drive visitors to their next meeting or hand them off to another Friend or get them to a public transportation station or airport.

Timeline and contact information:

O&V can hear from meetings and individuals about their ideas and wishes anytime. Fall 2016 will be the deadline for the first applications to be a traveling visitor or elder, with travel to happen in spring 2017. As O&V gains experience and meetings gain familiarity with the program, we aim for two visitation trips per year, as budget allows. We seek volunteers to serve on the sub-committee with O&V that will oversee a particular visitor's trip. We on the O&V committee are excited about this NPYM travel and visitation program. We expect you will be, too! O&V can be reached care of the clerk

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