

Ministry and Counsel Report 2025

The Ministry and Counsel committee gathered most months through the last year on Zoom, meeting more frequently as we prepared for annual sessions. Our purpose continues to be tending to the spiritual wellbeing of IYM(C) and its meetings, members and attenders. In light of this, we have engaged in the following areas.

Advices and Queries We followed up on the minute received from 2024 annual sessions which asked Ministry and Counsel to explore how meetings are using the advices and queries. We were asked to invite meetings to send any specific revision suggestions to M&C, including the names of those willing to serve on a query revision committee, should one be formed.

Several meetings have responded. Ministry and Counsel affirms the varied ways that meetings use Advices and Queries. We recommend that the consideration of whether to engage in query revision be carried forward as responses continue to come in through the coming year.

Intervisitation Last fall we focused on intervisitation and how to foster more communication between meetings. We're glad to report that some intervisitation has been occurring, though more would be welcomed as Way opens for Friends. We encourage Friends to stay open to leads in fostering intervisitation among Friends, and also with the wider community of faith.

We note that IYM(C) is less cohesive than in years past. Several meetings have attenders new to Quakerism who don't have a sense of the resource the yearly meeting represents. We wonder whether it would be helpful to be more intentional about conveying what the yearly meeting's purpose is, and how it operates. Could this help increase attendance at annual sessions? Might a map or graphic with geographical locations and some basics about the meetings within IYM(C) be useful? We were not able to follow through on this idea but feel this could be helpful.

Time and presence seem to be two things that we do well. Being together for bi-annual gatherings (Midyear Meeting and IYM(C) annual sessions) is especially rich, as are meeting visits either in person or digitally.

Spiritual Sharing Small Groups are in their fifth year. Participant numbers were down this year so the SSSG subcommittee generated a survey to help us understand this. Thirty-nine surveys were sent out; sixteen people responded. Over 90% of respondents were glad they had participated. Some groups struggled while others thrived. The groups that were able to meet consistently became important sources of support for each other. A willingness to listen and share in this context has enriched many relationships between Friends within IYM(C). We appreciate the faithful work of the subcommittee that shepherds this program.

Retreat A subcommittee had worked toward holding a Ministry and Counsel retreat in October of 2025, though we ultimately needed to let this go. Way may open for a gathering in the future. In the meantime, we're grateful for the opportunities we have to connect, and for the work of this subcommittee.

Minnesota marriage law We received a proposed minute regarding a recent change in Minnesota law that repealed marriage protections for Quakers and four other groups. We struggled over whether to refer an edited version of the minute to yearly meeting, and couldn't come to clarity about doing so at this time.

Religious Education reports received reflect wide ranging adult education opportunities including advice and query considerations; use of Pendle Hill pamphlets; consideration of concerns the world is facing; the Open Book Storytelling project; book discussions; supporting FCNL legislative priorities; hearing lectures and talks; participating in online or in-person informational meetings; Bible study; exploration of the Naylor Sonnets written by Kenneth Boulding and many other activities. A summary of these reports will appear in the Minute book.

State of the Meeting reports. We read State of the Meeting reports together. Some meetings that have been shrinking in recent years are now welcoming new members and attenders, while others have fewer numbers than in years past and struggle to care for their meetinghouses and grounds. The theme of refuge emerged — refuge that invites and includes, and also provides support within the meeting community. We listened to the ways that meetings are carrying the weight of the world, sensing often a gentle, focused, thoughtful response to deep challenges. We heard affirmation for the longstanding Friends tradition of holding the many facets of a difficulty in Love and discernment. Shared service was apparent, as well as generous measures of loving care within meetings. The reports reflect a sense of celebration, concern, tenderness, vibrant life and faithfulness to the Spirit. We recommend that annual sessions listen to these reports together.

Throughout the year, we shared often about how we were doing as individuals, and kept in touch with how our meetings were faring. We abide in the faith that the ‘long arc’ of Love and Light will continue to be revealed — day by precious day, and also in the fullness of time as we seek Spirit’s guidance together as Friends within IYM(C), with the larger body of Friends, and with people of faith worldwide. Let us continue as a yearly meeting body to pray and work for healing and wholeness in the kinship of the Creative Divine.

For the Committee,
Billie Wade and Jane Cadwallader Howe, Co-Clerks