Minute to Lay Down the Intervisitation Working Group

Approved by the Intervisitation Working Group and
submitted to the Baltimore Yearly Meeting Ministry & Pastoral Care Committee
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Over the past 20 years, the Intervisitation Program has done much to build relationships and community across Yearly Meetings and to advance the practice of intervisitation. However, in recent years, the Intervisitation Working Group (IWG) has had difficulty sustaining active participation in its meetings. Therefore, we have discerned the time has come to lay down the Intervisitation Working Group. Still, we understand and trust that the Program Committee will carry forward the welcome we have offered to incoming visitors at our Annual Sessions. We understand that supporting travel in ministry, including financial support, continues to be a basic charge of the Ministry & Pastoral Committee.

We recognize the many gifts that IWG has brought to the BYM community, including a better understanding of the following:

-ministry of presence
-ministry of hospitality
-discernment and support of traveling ministers
-travel minutes
-role of elders and support committees

Some of this learning has been included in the Manual of Procedure Appendix E: Guidelines for Embracing the Ministry of Friends, approved 10/19/2013.

Our intervisitation program grew out of a major challenge in 2002 to BYM's relationship with the Friends United Meeting (FUM) community. After laboring for two years, BYM was led to visit and get to know Friends in that which is eternal. We hoped our visits would help rebuild community with Friends across FUM. We visited without any agenda other than to be with one another. In 2013, we were called to broaden our focus beyond FUM and explore how to integrate intervisitation into the routine practice of Friends. The original *ad hoc* Intervisitation Committee was laid down, and the current Intervisitation Working Group was established under the care of the M&PC Committee with a new and broader mission statement. (See Interim Meeting Minute I2013-38 and 2015 IWG Annual Report.)

Many Friendships have grown out of this leading. Over the years, the fellowship, learning, and mutual respect has deepened. Indeed, we have grown very fond of Friends throughout the broader Quaker community, both in the United States and abroad. We know our presence has helped other Yearly Meetings weather some storms. We are very grateful for these bonds that honor various expressions of Quaker practice and help to bridge across theological spectrums.

Now, BYM Friends continue to travel, often with travel minutes, elders, and support committees, even without IWG sponsorship. This is a testament of the lasting cultural and spiritual impact of our visitation. There is a growing recognition of public ministers across the country and wider conversations about financial support for them. We hope that intervisitation has in fact been integrated into the routine practice of Friends and trust in the work of M&PC to continue to support that.

We hope there will continue to be forums for exchanging news of Friends, sharing traveling stories, and witnessing how the Spirit moves in our wider Quaker community. Our meetings were always informative and fun, personally supportive and creative, and spiritually nourishing. Perhaps some Friends will sponsor an interest group at Annual Sessions, or at other times, to keep the fires alive. We expect the Intervisitation Lounge at Annual Session will continue to provide for informal fellowship with one another. While our institutional working group is no longer functional, we observe that various Yearly Meetings network in other ways that keep the ministry alive. For now, IWG Friends are faithful to where we are and will trust the process as it is given.