College Park Quarterly Meeting
Ministry and Oversight Committee Report
October 14, 2017

Why do we offer and listen to committee reports? Perhaps it is part curiosity, part a desire for oversight. Perhaps we want to give our committee members a sense of recognition of their work. These may all be good reasons, but I often feel in my own meeting's business session, that in a report that merely reviews recent activity we are missing the opportunity to do what I think our Quaker tradition gathers in silence to do: to be deepened in our connection with God, and to be called to lives of faithful living. Our committee has not reported to all of you in recent sessions. We bring a report to you this time that I hope serves the spirit at work among us.

First I want to remind you of what you have charged our committee to do.
A: ***to nurture the spiritual life of the quarter****: how?—plans, org support, -- what is it that we do that nurtures your spiritual life? How does that happen? When? Where?*

B: ***to nurture the spiritual life and good order of Monthly Meetings****: how—do you feel this effect? What would you ask for to accomplish this? [regional gatherings of clks, m&O members; retreats; internal issues support]*

C. ***to receive state of mtg repts****: to what end? Is your meeting nurtured by this process? Do we as a gathered body receive nurture, guidance, or give it, in response?*

Second, I want to say something of how I see the tradition in which we all work: Consider this metaphor: we Quakers have all, in joining the society, been born into an inheritance--and that is the Quaker tradition. This tradition—to which Lloyd Lee Wilson proposes we are "apprentices," is something we can receive, or enter, through the disciplines, texts, history and practices of Quaker life. Its key insight is that God speaks to us directly—that the essence of life's secret message and power comes <u>through</u> us, not <u>to</u> us from the outside. Yet ironically, the ways of attending , listening, understanding, and responding to this inner message in the midst of a distracting and in fact "countering" set of world conditions, is *learned*. This is the inheritance, this set of things to be learned and practiced. The seed at the center is beyond all human constructions, but the way to find and embody it is human-made and human-maintained. We are, in this sense, the receivers and the makers and the maintainers. Our committee wrestles in each of our meetings with the question of how we are to shape our time together, how we can make and maintain, perhaps how we are to share in, this inheritance. And certainly, how we pass it on to our next generation, already among us and seeking their own way with us.

Third, I want to say something of the particular issues we've been working with in our meetings. These questions we raise are your questions, too;
1- attendance: why so few? Do we need a quarterly gathering? Why do we come together?
2- what happens at quarterly gatherings? Do we need some radical re-structuring? NMerrill and call to reshape our institutions. Committees and challenges of nom—frequent repts of difficulty finding those who will serve. Are we too busy to be quakers?
3- MM's as isolated islands—we sense tentative connections to QM and YM— but most of us live within our monthly boundaries. clusters, regional gatherings? Streamlining org at every level? Sufficient unto ourselves?
4- visiting of MM—to what end? Do we crave visitation? What comes of it? Should we—the committee and all of us—step into this work? From my experience, I would say yes, -- it's a tradition to be recovered.

Fourth, a personal reflection
I am in this work because I grow from it and I am committed to this remarkable and frustrating project called the Quaker way. I still believe the seed is there, I still find friends deeply pulled to its center and working to revive and nourish its possibility in an overbusy and distracted world. This distracting world is still at work as a counter current within our meetings themselves, and in each of us. I struggle with my own meeting, and with the larger, harder to manage levels of Quaker life. Many of you here I know well, and I have shared parts of my long Quaker journey with you. As we face a very disturbing global and national condition, and most immediately stand before the terrible destruction of these surrounding fires, I can only encourage us all to dig deep, to listen deep, to live our faith. Let us practice with one another what is sometimes named "calling in"-- bring about the conversation that draws each into what is real for us, that risks the question, or the sharing, that drops us down to that other level, where things happen, where openings arise, where beloved community abides.

Finally, know that our committee welcomes your guidance and support, your suggested new directions and even your call for reversals and corrections. We are all in this together.

Jim Anderson
Clerk, College Park Quarterly Meeting Ministry and Oversight Committee