

A Letter to Intermountain Yearly Meeting

It's been a long time coming.

At one of the early meetings that led to the decision to write a *Faith and Practice* for Intermountain Yearly Meeting, Friends recognized that whatever the final product might be, the process itself would prove immeasurably valuable to the creation and quality of that product and to the spiritual growth of those who participated. So it has been.

Since 1993, Friends from the monthly meetings and worship groups of Intermountain Yearly Meeting have gathered to tackle the charge of writing a *Faith and Practice*. At first, there was a good deal of floundering as the committee tried to work out an appropriate procedure. Later, slowly, the committee began to produce preliminary versions of the material they felt was essential for inclusion. Later still, and always slowly, the various chapters went through draft after draft of emendation and editing, approaching ever more closely the present version.

Still, questions about the wisdom of the endeavor persisted within the Intermountain Yearly Meeting community. Why should the yearly meeting have its own *Faith and Practice* at all? Aren't there a lot of them already available to us? How can we justify the time, expense, and energy such an effort requires? Answers to these questions were not immediately evident. The work has been time-consuming and hard. All the many Friends who have served on the Faith and Practice Committee (some for a single committee meeting, some for years) have had to delve deep into our history, what it means to be a Quaker, and our present practice and faith. An even larger number of Friends, within their monthly meetings and worship groups, have spent thoughtful hours spiritually engaged in critical discussion of the materials so as to provide feedback to the committee.

As is often the case when it comes to leadings, the answers to the persisting questions about why we needed to do this have emerged only through the process of faithfully fulfilling our charge. We have, as individuals, as a committee, and as monthly meetings, engaged both the material and one another at a deeper level. As we have struggled to choose words reflective of Intermountain Yearly Meeting Friends, new ties to one another have developed, our commitment to each other has deepened, and our understanding of our unique identity as a yearly meeting has grown. The process has affected us all.

We hope that what follows justifies the faith of Intermountain Yearly Meeting Friends in seeing this lengthy process through. We feel we can offer this *Faith and Practice* as a celebration and witness to all Friends in our yearly meeting, to the general Quaker community, and to the wide world—a gift of our living faith. Over the next year, Friends are urged to season this book by using it: read it, study it, evaluate it, and talk about it. We hope a good part of it meets with approval.

from the Faith and Practice Committee

