

FGC Traveling in the Ministries Program

By Deborah Fisch

In its fifth year as a part of Friends General Conference, the Traveling Ministries Program (TMP) continues to grow in understanding the spiritual needs of its affiliated meetings and in seeking ways to better serve them. The purpose of the TMP is to help nurture the spiritual deepening of meetings by facilitating travel of seasoned Friends to meetings and worship groups, by encouraging meetings to nurture and support their members in developing their own gifts of ministry.

More than 65 volunteer Friends have traveled to over 160 meetings and worship groups in the four and one-half years since the Traveling Ministries Program began. Friends of Canadian Yearly Meeting have been an important part of that work. Of those 160 visits, 19 have been to meetings or worship groups within CYM. There are currently five CYM Friends who have volunteered to travel for the TMP. Liz Kamphausen, of Toronto Meeting, serves on the Traveling Ministries Committee. CYM has sent representatives to participate in the two TMP consultations on recognizing and nurturing spiritual gifts, and CYM Friends have also been among those attending the annual retreat for Friends traveling in the ministry. Additional future visits within CYM are being considered. Meetings or worship groups seeking a visit are encouraged to contact the coordinator of the TMP.

Most visits have been in the form of what might be called a listening ministry, that is, traveling with the intent to listen to, and worship with, Friends to learn how the Spirit is working. Most often, a meeting will set aside special time to spend with the visitors such as in a weekend retreat or a workshop on a given topic. In addition to facilitating retreats or workshops for an entire meeting, TMP volunteers have met with First Day School classes, clerks, committees, individuals, isolated Friends, and others as way has opened. The visits provide an opportunity to speak to the movement

of the Divine in individual lives, as well as in the life of the meeting. Sometimes visits by volunteers challenge meetings and/or individuals to re-examine their own spiritual lives. Often they encourage, affirm, and help Friends to rediscover the Divine in their midst.

The TMP hosts an annual retreat for its volunteers, as well as others traveling in the ministry with a minute from their meetings. The TMC has purposely sought locations with reasonable rates and has provided registration at reduced rates for Canadian Friends because of the differences in exchange rates. It also provides the same benefits to Canadian Friends when it hosts its biannual consultation of affiliated yearly meetings.

The Yearly Meeting Visitors Program that sends an FGC visitor to the annual sessions of affiliated yearly meetings, and the Couple Enrichment Program that provides workshops, are also a part of the TMP. Canadian Yearly Meeting has benefited from both these programs in recent years.

As Friends continue to hunger for a deepening of Spirit in their meetings, so the work of the TMP proceeds to grow. The TMP patterns its work after John Woolman who, when explaining

his visit to a nearby community of indigenous peoples, said that the first motion was love; the second was to listen and learn of what they might share of the Spirit with him; and the third was, if led, to share what the Spirit might ask him.

In these times, as in all times, we are strengthened and blessed when we share with each other how the Spirit calls us to Love. The TMP strives to help meetings and Friends continue in this good tradition. □

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