Seeking Consistency in Word and Deed

Roy Taylor, QEW Clerk

Are we doing a good job at doing what we say we are supposed to be doing?

Years ago we developed a variety of ways to describe ourselves. The FCUN working group is now reviewing the words we use to see if they still have meaning for us, are they accurate and do they need updating to better reflect the organization that we are now?

The following is my review of our introductory statement:

Quaker Earthcare Witness is a network of Friends (Quakers) in North America and other like-minded people who are taking spirit-led action to address the ecological and social crises of the world from a spiritual perspective, emphasizing Quaker process and testimonies, including continuing revelation. ... QEW’s primary calling is to facilitate transformation of humans’ attitudes, values, identity, and worldview that underlie much of the environmental destruction going on in the world today.
If we are a "network," what are we doing to grow and promote this network? Are our activities designed to be network friendly? How could we be networking better?

I wondered about why we focus our activities on North America when we are working on a global issue. When asking about the history of this bracketing I was informed that this term was used as an inclusive and not selective phrase. We wanted to be something more than just a group within the United States and Canada. We wanted to include Costa Rica and so we expanded our thinking to include the entire continent. While I personally find this restrictive and self-limiting, I acknowledge the fear of taking on the whole world, so let’s just focus on our portion of it. What are we doing to reach out to Friends in other countries of of the Americas? Where would that work fit within our structure?

What do we mean by "taking spirit-led action ... from a spiritual perspective”? I think that we have been working on this and we are now using the term contemplative action. How might this phrase be integrated into our description?

Quaker organizations were taken to task this month in an article in Friends Journal, "Doing Good Well," by Charles Schade (http://www.friendsjournal.org/good-well/). His suggestions for what we should be aiming for:

- Set measurable goals and make the goals public;
- Provide relevant program metrics tied to program level cost information;
- Make concrete funding requests based on anticipated activities and projected results, not on anecdotes and vague appeals to emotion;
- Report on successful and less-than-successful activities, describing lessons learned from each outcome and the changes anticipated as a result; and
- Ask donors to support the administrative work necessary to accomplish regular evaluation and reporting.

I agree with Charles on these points and I am pleased to note that we are already working on these in part. This is a good reminder that we need to be more publicly obvious with our work in the manner that we publish our stories on our website. While he is very goal and program oriented in his review we also need to be clear about our purpose and how we describe ourselves to others. At our last Continuing Council Committee meeting we were reminded that we should be using the five statements of purpose (reapproved last summer) in a more prominent manner.

All of our committees and working groups are describing themselves and their work. These descriptions will be posted on the website along with the stories of the work these groups are accomplishing. This will show us where our resources of time and money are best spent. Fund raising to support these activities will have greater clarity and we will then be able to measure some of the successes we are experiencing.

A number of our committees and working groups are exploring new ways to reach out to our base and further. Exploring clear and concise ways to define ourselves and our vision helps both us and those with whom we are trying to communicate. These will be helpful tools for our Yearly Meeting representatives as they go back to their meetings with our message. It will also be helpful for our members who are finding new people and organizations that have not met us yet to get quickly past who we are and move on to how we can be working together.

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