

Friday, December 9, 2016

Brad opened the meeting with prayer and readings from Matthew, after briefly identifying where to find restrooms and where we will be sharing a meal together this evening.

We took time to share the things that came to mind that we do better together. Representatives generated a 3-page list of organizations, programs, and shared ministry efforts. Brad had us quietly think about the items on the list and choose one as a focus for prayer. Brad closed the time in prayer.

Brad offered an overview of the process representatives will work through this weekend. His plan is for us to address one “threshing” question at a time. Eric put up the first threshing question on the screen: What might be the outcomes of an overturning of the elders’ decision? Before we started sharing in response to the question, Brad reminded everyone: “If you’re here, you’re in.” Everyone has a voice. “Speak with confidence whatever the Spirit is leading you to say.”

A Lawrence, Spokane - returns power to the representatives

K Morse, Star – calls elders’ other decisions into question

A Joplin, Spokane - A lot of hurt and grief in some parties

R Espinola, Woodland – we face a potential split no matter what

B Kelley, Rosedale – we go back to zero, calls into question any decision the ym makes anywhere

WAIT

P Krueger, Lynwood – cause a weakening of the ym, might be saying that the structure is faulty

S Todd, Clackamas Park – grieve and upset churches that agree with the decision

P Smith, Newberg – West Hills will remain, members of West Hills would be able to serve

M McDougal, West Chehalem – could result in “shattering,” could lead to other actions that undermine Faith & Practice

J Hawthorne, Olympic View – could give new guidelines to elders, could give authority back to churches and representatives

R Myers, Camas – preserve the diversity of NWYM

T Walker, Hillsboro – what is the role of the elders? Are we approaching people from love or in response to sin?

G Hankins, Newberg – we might see people leaving one church and going to another; some people might change; learning how to be patient with one another; we want to feel comfort in what we believe; might not have any ill effect on NWYM

K Morse, Star – commandments in Scripture given for our good; we are to be held accountable; only loving thing to do is to share what Scripture says; undermines hundreds of years of foundation that have been built up in Quaker tradition, in Faith & Practice, in the success we’ve seen

P Smith, Newberg – many people will interpret it as an endorsement of the West Hills decision to affirm gay marriage

BRAD ASKED US TO WAIT IN SILENCE FOR A MOMENT BEFORE CONTINUING

P Anderson, North Valley – I don’t think we’re in agreement to overturn it, churches that leave the yearly meeting leave their property behind

A Joplin, Spokane – I believe the elders had no choice because they were making a decision based on “following the law.” I think the elders were looking forward to an appeal. I think they were hoping that we might come together and find grace. John Woolman was asked to leave his meeting. I’m not saying West Hills is John Woolman. Quakers have been human before and they’ve made mistakes before. My prayer is that the outcome of overturning the elders’ decision might be that we would find a third way.

F Cammack, Tigard – confessed that he has come with biases. I disagree with the decision the elders made. I'm trying to figure out what it means to listen. If the Spirit says something different from what I want, I'm struggling with that. We don't have to make the same decision they made. That doesn't mean the decision they made was wrong. Overturning the elders' decision wouldn't necessarily reflect poorly on the elders.

M Fawver, Newberg – challenging to the creedal or prescriptive tendencies of the Faith and Practice and its role in our community

S Leonard, Crossroads – if we aren't going to approve the report, why even have elders?

C Parker, Eugene – the elders and yearly meeting would be spared a similar process with a number of churches in the yearly meeting that have discerned a leading similar to that of West Hills. The elders have better work to do.

R Myers, Camas – We were unable to approve the elders' decision. We didn't overturn it.

BRAD SAID WE'D BRING THAT UP ON QUESTION 4

D Hansen, Entiat – shatter the foundations of people's beliefs. We would be leading people astray from God's word and we would be responsible for that.

S Geil, Cherry Grove – are we saying we don't have the right elders? Are we saying our discernment is better than that of the elders?

M Mahoney, Vancouver – could acknowledge continuing revelation of the Holy Spirit. It also might lead to an adjustment or changing of our Faith and Practice.

BRAD ASKED FOR CLARIFICATION, THEOLOGICALLY? STRUCTURALLY? – BOTH

A Weinacht, Greenleaf – affects governance and marketing of Greenleaf Friends Academy

C Hudson, North Seattle - There was not agreement among the elders toward this decision. No part of us has absolute authority over another part. We believe the Spirit will not lead persons contrary to the teachings of the scriptures. That's true of any group.

BRAD ASKED AGAIN THAT WE STAY WITHIN THE PARAMETERS OF THE QUESTION

D Sartwell, Newberg – Hope that leaders in our ym will lead us in a review of our history and our polity

S Czarnecki, Newberg – people may leave if it's overturned. There are also people who will choose to come if it's overturned. Overturning it would be a step toward saying, "Yes, please come."

K Beebe, Netarts – it creates a disconnect between Faith and Practice and our actual practice. Will be hard for people to know what it is that we actually believe.

J Fodge, Peninsula – I would view it as a confirmation that we, as a yearly meeting, believe there are two gospels. There would be many of us who would say that that other gospel is no gospel at all and we must come out from them.

M Fawver, Newberg – could help us create a precedent of seeking the third way we've been talking about in conversations of church discipline.

TAKING A 15-MINUTE BREAK

K Morse, Star – We need to consider what this means for George Fox

S Espinola, Woodland – Overturning the elders' decision could make it appear that we affirm West Hills actions. Churches that choose not to perform weddings, would they then be out of compliance?

J Lujan, Caldwell – It could put our individual meetings at legal risk if we don't all perform weddings

D Brown, Newberg – all that overturning the elders' decision does is overturn the elders' decision

S Borgman, Clackamas Park – people from my church will be leaving, and it will be very sad.

P Anderson, North Valley – our relationship with EFCNA is significant to keep in mind. If God leads us to change our connectional agreement – Faith and Practice – then the thing to do is to change it. Until we change it, we're bound legally and covenantally to support it.

D Hansen, Entiat – churches may leave the yearly meeting

C Hudson, North Seattle – is it different if a church leaves as opposed to one being asked to leave (in terms of property and things like that)?

RETHA – WE HAVEN'T BEEN FACED WITH THAT YET

B Bosnjak, Hillsboro – why “overturning” instead of “approve or disapprove”?

BRAD – WE WILL GET INTO THAT IN QUESTION 4

J Hawthorne, Olympic View – will cause ym to examine the ways Faith and Practice has been embraced or ignored by churches in many areas (gave examples of membership requirements, area meeting structure, terms of service on local church elders)

E White, Meridian – asked us to replace the question on display with the question Ken Redford brought to the floor at annual sessions

C Heath, Peninsula – on what basis is it overturned? Our church is prepared to leave. There would be a shift from anti-gay to a pro-gay position.

B Banham, City's Edge – create a reorganization or split of our yearly meeting. Might create an opportunity.

L Holt, North Valley –Camps, George Fox. Those are underwritten by financial gifts. Saying splitting. Even putting that out there. We need to understand that has complications for our work together as a yearly meeting. Overturning the elders' decision makes it possible for further conversation to take place.

B Bosnjak, Hillsboro – our yearly meeting is not in unity on the decision.

K Morse, Star – West Hills would continue in their stance and practice, regarding same-sex marriage. There are believers for whom this is a “crisis of conscience.” Reference to leadership that allows that to occur.

P Meier, East Hill – When we sin, we give a foothold to the enemy and from there he can build a stronghold.

D Hansen, Entiat – Concern about the consistency about what we are teaching youth, our children. We need to take into consideration what we are teaching our young people.

C Whorton, Klamath Falls – Whether we overturn or don't overturn, we set in motion the machinery that some churches will elect to leave the yearly meeting. There are real consequences. When Quakers don't hear from God, they wait. Waiting on God is never an error.

D Thomas, Newberg – Is there room still to work through this?

L Ankeny, Homedale – possible outcomes might be continued confusion. Question about who has authority. Perception that churches can do whatever they want without consequence.

WAITING IN SILENCE

Eric put up the second threshing question on the screen: What might be the outcomes if the elders' decision stands? Brad read the question.

P Smith, Newberg – It opens a way for progress. It's my deepest concern to pursue unity and love in the yearly meeting. We could invite West Hills Friends to remain in fellowship on some other status within the yearly meeting.

P Fendall, West Chehalem – read a statement. Carefully follow the truth in God's word.

D Sartwell, Newberg – reduce the complexity of our ongoing need to discuss issues of human sexuality. This will not settle anything more than the status of West Hills Friends Church.

N Silliman, Camas – accepting the elders' decision makes a lot of people feel like their voice doesn't have a place in NWYM anymore. May stifle voices.

B Moormann, Lynwood – if we come to unity, regardless of what that decision is, it could be a wonderful blessing.

S Todd, Clackamas Park – it will send a signal to our churches and the individuals in our churches that we stand with the Lord's commands.

B Kelley, Rosedale – it would release the tension and provides a sense of clarity for next steps, where we go from here. It provides a sense of integrity for everyone. Quoted F&P section that identifies homosexuality as a sexual perversion equal to and categorized with sexual abuse.

W Jenkins, Scotts Mills – Jesus put aside his own agenda for the Father’s will. His human life, which he gave out of love, out of obedience.

T Bartell, Talent – decision of the elders needs to stand

M Mahoney, Vancouver – we would lose a church that has been part of us

S Borgman, Clackamas Park – Other people need to follow our elders and dedicate their lives to Jesus.

E White, Meridian – We dig into the scriptures more. I want to do more study myself and see what it says. Scripture is a valid authority for us.

T Walker, Hillsboro – Everything we said about question 1 could be said about question 2. I have a hard time with people or churches wanting to leave because of decisions. Our church has been through a lot of struggle, but it’s my home. Why this issue?

R Myers, Camas – It would move us toward treating Faith and Practice more like doctrine.

A Davis, Metolius – Satan had ‘hold of me, and I didn’t even know it

P Krueger, Lynwood – there is a way forward. The Faith & Practice.

S Czarnecki, Newberg – we would be on the wrong side of history. This is our current civil rights movement. No pain, no gain. Sometimes it hurts. All of this is part of our growing pains. This pain is helping us grow. I want to keep West Hills Friends in the conversation and at the table.

A Weinacht, Greenleaf – It will restore confidence in the yearly meeting among a lot of people in the yearly meeting. It does mitigate some very real threats. It creates a healthy level of accountability. Integrity. To stand with the elders keeps integrity of speech. Let’s not confuse feelings with wisdom. The Lord will honor it. I want to say that prophetically.

P Harrison, Entiat – We have accountability as Christians. The main thing we need to worry about is the second coming and living for Christ.

BRAD ASKED US TO WAIT IN SILENCE FOR A FEW MOMENTS BEFORE CONTINUING

A Joplin, Spokane – We will have a false sense that we have solved the problem. It’s a temporary solution to a problem that’s not going to go away. Jesus went through the law and he pointed out to us, it’s what’s in your heart. Women speak in our meetings. We gave up on slaves obeying their masters. I’m a Friend because God calls me, “Friend.”

S Todd, Clackamas Park – West Hills will no longer be in limbo. They will not be bound by the standards of our yearly meeting.

J Bannister, Newberg – We’ll stay in our comfort zone. The locus of control will stay where it’s at. We’ll continue to minister to those around us who look like us. We’ll continue to isolate those on the margins. They will continue to feel scared.

M Fawver, Newberg – The message I hear is “This is not your home.” That makes me sad.

A Lawrence, Spokane – We should love all people. I don’t belong here, and it breaks my heart to say that. There are core values we all can ascribe to. This isn’t the path that will get us there.

D Hansen, Entiat – We’re all sinners. I’m a sinner. And we can’t fix each other. If we uphold the decision of the elders, why can they not walk alongside each other and support those. Why can we not walk beside them and guide them, and worship with them? But we don’t have to condone their actions. Not to continue to commit that sin. Not condone sinful acts. We don’t have to lose people. We have to decide whether these actions are sinful. It’s the act that’s the sin. I think we have to stand behind the elders and hold on to the integrity of God’s word.

BRAD ASKED US TO WAIT IN SILENCE FOR A FEW MOMENTS BEFORE CONTINUING

F Cammack, Tigard – Referenced Peter’s vision of a sheet being lowered from heaven. Why use Faith and Practice as a weapon? We need to put people first. Maybe God does have room in his kingdom for gay couples who want to marry each other.

J Hawthorne, Olympic View – it could make it impossible for us to have hard discussions, especially as it would be easier to just release people instead of having this hard journey.

G Hankins, Newberg – It will be good to people who are exclusive. But we have a long ways to go. If there are any homosexuals in this room, I can tell you that I love you dearly. Dramatic story of AIDS patient. “I held his hands. He was dying.” Just because you’ve been preaching it for years doesn’t make it right. This is a civil rights issue.

M Downs, Reedwood – More conflict. How can we come to some kind of agreement on this issue? Instead of isolating from each other.

E Price, Eugene – One outcome is that we will continue to give the false and dishonest impression that the elders all heard the same thing. We silence voices of dissent. The elders don’t give a minority report or decision the way the Supreme Court does.

C Parker, Eugene – a line-up of churches, some of which are already in a queue, will have to be dealt with in some fashion similar to what West Hills has been through over the last 6 years. Some churches have said they will leave if the elders’ decision is overturned. Churches that are becoming affirming are not planning to leave. If the elders’ decision stands, right or wrong, we will lose a block of young adults and kids from our yearly meeting.

B Bosnjak, Hillsboro – We would lose West Hills. I admire them for their skill in Quaker procedure. Their theology. Their involvement with yearly meeting. The pricelessness of the people who are there. The precedent would be set that if you are not in agreement with someone somewhere a viable method of dealing with the conflict is to eject them.

K Morse, Star – By upholding the elders’ decision we’re upholding biblical commands that are still relevant. This is one of those issues. All of our churches open our doors to everyone. This is a different issue. West Hills has an opportunity to become part of the yearly meeting again. There’s always an open door to come back.

L Ankeny, Homedale – Might free West Hills to pursue the call of God that they have discerned. I wonder if that is true and what they are sensing in their meeting.

BRAD RECOMMENDED ASKING REPRESENTATIVES FROM WEST HILLS DURING DINNER

CLYDE PARKER PRAYED FOR US PRIOR TO THE BREAK FOR DINNER

CONTINUED AT 6:30

P Anderson, North Valley – We have to consider whether the elders followed good process.

A Baker, North Valley – If the elders’ decision stands it will break my heart and it will break the heart of many in my meeting. I’m also on Faith and Practice and I got to see the responses to the statement we brought a few years ago. I don’t know that West Hills being out of the yearly meeting will solve the issue. West Hills is one of the larger contributors to the yearly meeting. Are other churches going to pick up what they contribute?

Eric put up the third threshing question on the screen: What might be the outcomes of not coming to a decision? Brad read the question.

S Leonard, Crossroads – We’ll be stalled. We’ll lack vision. We’ll be nearsighted from having to pay so much attention to this issue. We need to get out of this stall and move forward.

B Kelley, Rosedale – If there’s a decision under appeal, and the appeal isn’t clear, then the decision stands. If we can’t decide what to do, then I feel that means we allow the elders’ decision to stand. I think it’s time.

P Krueger, Lynwood – Does the elders’ decision stand if we don’t make a decision here?

BRAD BRIEFLY RESPONDED, REGARDING THE ADMIN COUNCIL FRAMING OF THE DISCUSSION

M Mahoney, Vancouver - third way might be amending Faith and Practice, to find a way forward that we can agree to.

P Smith, Newberg – we can expect there to be continued confusion/division over the moral acceptability of gay marriage. We should affirm the decision, release West Hills, and immediately request that West Hills stay in fellowship with us.

R Myers, Camas – seasoning, waiting until we can come to a decision

T Walker, Hillsboro – is kicking out a church something that we do? It feels like a witch hunt. It's like we're telling them that their process was wrong. And they can't be part of us because they're going to contaminate us or something. If he kicks me out of heaven because I have opened my arms to all people, I would rather that than be kicked out

BRAD ASKED THAT WE BE CAREFUL WITH OUR WORDS

S Czarnecki, Newberg – one thing that might come out of no decision might be more meetings/events like this. Are there more contexts where we can have these kinds of conversations?

E White, Meridian – I haven't ever seen a church where everyone absolutely agrees. I would guess there are some who disagree at West Hills even. I don't know why people would want to join an organization they don't agree with.

M McDougal, West Chehalem – more confusion and unrest. Further erosion of Faith and Practice.

S Borgman, Clackamas Park – West Hills decided they were the ones who wanted to leave because they didn't want to follow Faith and Practice

R Espinola, Woodland – If we don't affirm what the elders said, then we are going to be an organization that has no direction. Or we will have to change our organization. Their decision was backed by the Holy Spirit. We're not saying gays and lesbians can't come into our church and worship with us, we're just putting limitations on what they can do when they're in there. We shouldn't allow them to join the church or hold offices of importance. Not coming to a decision is not going to do anyone any good at all. It needs to come to a head. It needs to be decided so we can heal and move on.

BRAD ASKED US TO WAIT FOR A FEW MOMENTS BEFORE CONTINUING

A Joplin, Spokane – we should humble ourselves before God and say, "I think I'm right, and I'm not going to insist on that." God could do a mighty work in us. God could show his power in us. It would be really hard to do.

D Brown, Caldwell – This option is no option. Not making a decision is the same as overturning the elders' decision. I don't feel like this is an option.

J Fodge, Peninsula – No decision isn't an option. What happens if one church leaves? Quite a few churches have withheld resources because of the sense that our yearly meeting is moving away from our Faith and Practice. That's a lot of resource that could be released if there was a sense that our yearly meeting was going to be faithful to our faith and practice.

F Cammack, Tigard – it feels like we're talking past each other. We're not going to make a decision until we are willing to do the hard work of talking to each other and listening to each other. We are a divided yearly meeting. I wish we could just make this about the issues and not about West Hills. It's not fair to put them at the center. We are the ones with a problem. We are divided. We don't trust each other.

P Anderson, North Valley – I think we are more unified when we acknowledge that it's easy to be fearful or assume the worst about someone who disagrees with us. I think we agree on a whole lot. We seek above all else to follow Christ. Upholding the authority of scripture. Attentiveness to contemporary social concerns. Our concerns are to be rooted in love for God and love for others. We agree that hatred and violence are wrong. Embrace the needy and those rejected by society. Sexual orientation is not a sin. (not behavior, welcoming but not affirming, safe, discourage same-sex experimentation, intimacy reserved for marriage).

L Ankeny, Homedale – Not coming to a decision, we might be admitting that we are all approaching this from different places. Our view of scripture differs greatly. Perhaps we don't trust each other. Perhaps we're admitting that we don't trust our process. Perhaps we are admitting that our very foundation is

rocked, possibly cracked. One thing we're admitting is that we've probably all come to a place of personal conviction where we stand and it's hard when I've spent time in prayer and study and conversation and then to come into a place where we're in disagreement.

B Bosnjak, Hillsboro – I'm tired of worrying about it. I'm tired of talking about it. I'm tired of praying about it. But I don't feel God's done with us yet. What if we set a time period? Three years? Two years? One year? What if we could have people form teams to talk? Teams of people that they knew did not agree with each other. I wonder how long it would take us to talk together in small groups. 1) Allow time 2) Shepherd groups of differing folks together

J Hawthorne, Olympic View – What if it led us to do what we've done in the past? We're Quakers. We're a peace church. But we've made space for the "just war" types. Our clerk (local meeting) is not a pacifist. But there's space for him. We both love Jesus. And I love him.

D Brown, Newberg – One way of sticking together as we work through our differences is that we witness healthy disagreement to outside observers and to our children and the people we're supposed to suffer to come to Jesus and not hinder. We show them what love really looks like.

E Hibbs, North Seattle – God isn't known for making things easy. God doesn't say stop fighting, stop praying because things aren't going your way.

K Morse, Star – There may be churches that feel as though the yearly meeting is forcing a process of discernment they didn't agree to. Some churches subscribe to Faith and Practice. If there are some that disagree and we have to revisit this issue, that doesn't seem right. We should make sure the Holy Spirit moves among us in unity before things change.

D Hansen, Entiat – if we don't make a decision about this then we're not putting our trust in the people that we earlier said we put our trust in. If we don't make this decision then where do we go from there?

C Parker, Eugene – What if a separate yearly meeting emerged?

P Smith, Newberg – Are we really listening to God?

A Baker, North Valley – The statement that we have in our Faith and Practice was written in 1987. We had to agree we wouldn't change it for five years. Faith and Practice is a living document.

B Kelley, Rosedale – There will be changes that leave because no decision's been made. We all feel that the time for listening has come and as some has said, it's passed. It seems that those who are more liberal are more open to process. Conservatives look for a decision. Liberals enjoy the processing. We hope to have a superintendent very soon. If I were a candidate, I would like to know if I were going to be a superintendent of a unified yearly meeting, one that was going to split, or ...

R Myers, Camas – We demonstrated a few years ago that we are not in unity over section 18, so it seems a bit cart before the horse to use section 18 for action.

S Posey, Crossroads – What kind of leadership are we going to be able to get if we refuse to follow our leadership?

W Jenkins, Scotts Mills – Sound doctrine. Everything we believe is based on sound doctrine, where it ought to be.

E White, Meridian – We trust our committees to do the work of discernment and then bring their recommendation. This body could send this recommendation back to the elders. Maybe we need more work on it. We need work, though. We need help. We need a plan.

P Anderson, North Valley – I proposed that the decision be brought back to West Hills. If conducting same-sex marriages is incompatible with our Faith and Practice, what would West Hills choose to do. Let them decide.

In closing, Brad asked if we're brave enough to set out each of our ideas/opinions and let them go? Are we that brave? Can we let them go? Part of our challenge for tomorrow. We will reconvene at 8:30 a.m. on Saturday, December 10.

Started back at 8:30 on Saturday morning. Debbie Harrison opened with a devotional reflection from Psalm 109, followed with a time of waiting worship.

S Todd, Clackamas Park – it is possible to love people and not condone sin.

P Fendall, West Chehalis – support the decision of the elders

E Pharris, Meridian – we need to find unity, to do this hard work together

J Peyton, West Hills – I need voices in my life that disagree with me, voices that challenge my assumptions and beliefs. West Hills was a halfway house for me. I could come back to church again. West Hills allowed me to do that. We don't want to stay in order to make you agree with us. If individual meetings can welcome individuals, can the yearly meeting do that for a church? We love you, we welcome you, but we won't give you positions of authority. (suggested alternate status)

L Thurston, Boise – in a local meeting there is available the status of affiliate membership. They can't be on elders, be on stewards, or clerk a meeting. They are part of us but with some restrictions.

A Baker, North Valley – If a meeting believes differently about same-sex relationships that doesn't mean they're going against scripture or that they're disregarding scripture. People come to scripture and there are different interpretations, and scripture can still very much be a part of a meeting.

#### BRAD REMINDED US TO REMAIN FOCUSED ON THE QUESTION

B Kelley, Rosedale – accused West Hills of not consulting with the yearly meeting. The yearly meeting is split. Let's recognize that in our structure. The danger of a church not being accountable to anyone. We're talking about authority, not just affiliation. Create a separate yearly meeting? Have them affiliate with another organization?

P Callaway, South Salem – We are one body. We are one in the Spirit. If we do not deny that Spirit, we will be led in the way God wants us to be led. We're given assurance that God loves us. We are supposed to be in communion with God.

P Krueger, Lynwood – We've had various occasions to let other churches use our building. One of the overriding concerns as we consider who will use our building is our basic faith. Would anything be taught or done in our building that we would have objection to? If West Hills came and said we would like to use your building, as clerk of the meeting, I would have to object. For those who have same-sex attractions, anything outside of celibacy, I would have to object.

T Walker, Hillsboro – shared of a couple at Hillsboro Friends - for 30 years they chose to stay in fellowship with us, but they were denied membership because he had served in the armed forces. Christ himself would not turn away. He loved all.

P Smith, Newberg – a year and a half ago, Arthur Roberts suggested something like affiliate membership. Adopting this proposal would be difficult. But it offers us a way forward.

F Cammack, Tigard – affiliate membership seems like a good way forward. We need to take the distraction of West Hills and set it aside so we can have hard conversations and keep the yearly meeting together.

J Peyton, West Hills – we were willing to step back, but when we took that to our quarterly meeting for discernment, there was not clarity or unity there. 1) We are willing to step back. 2) I love the idea of covenant relationships. If you have an unbelieving spouse who is willing to stay with you, do not put that spouse away.

C Parker, Eugene – the question of expediency doesn't keep the same issue from coming up again and again. Affiliate membership is a band-aid proposition.

T Buskirk, Greenleaf – the keyword is hope. This is one of the words for Advent. For our yearly meeting to move forward, we can't move forward because we are unequally yoked. If you're not in step, you can't move forward.

#### BRAD READ FROM 1 PETER 1 AND 2

B Moormann, Lynwood – affiliate membership would fundamentally alter the nature of our covenant relationship. Our discernment in unity should bind us together in ministry. We need to have a sense of what is it God has called us to do and how we're going to live that out.

D Sartwell, Newberg – this is not just about West Hills. There are other congregations who feel very similar. There are congregations that have other issues, important to them. We face the prospect of somebody or some bodies having to decide where to draw the line.

Brad opened us in prayer as we returned from the break

P Meier, East Hill – They should have withdrawn

E Price, Eugene – What is best for the ministry of Christ? That might not be the institution of our yearly meeting which is a human institution. We may not be able to move forward as a united yearly meeting, so what do we do with all of our stuff?

B Pruitt, Marion – We need to honor our elders and the best way to keep the majority of our yearly meeting intact and to move forward together is to honor that decision. I feel bad about anybody leaving our fellowship of believers, but I'm not sure we have a choice.

M Mahoney, Vancouver – One of the things I've learned, being with Quakers, is the word patience. The right way is to be patient and wait. We want this resolved so we can go on with our lives. But we need to patiently wait. Trust in the slow work of God.

BRAD CHALLENGED US, IN THE WORK OF DISCERNMENT, TO TEST THE WORK OF THE SPIRIT  
INSIDE OF US. ARE YOU GIVING AID AND NEW LIGHT?

G Hankins, Newberg – Told about discussions at Newberg Friends. Learning to listen compassionately to people with different points of view. It's hard for us when we hold on to preconceived views. I have hope that we not put the cart before the horse. Hope comes from taking a look at our views and values in Faith and Practice. It's not set in stone.

P Anderson, North Valley – We should stay with Faith and Practice. If a church leaves the yearly meeting, the property stays behind in the yearly meeting. If people feel like leaving, this becomes a test of their conviction. It also becomes a test of conscience. That would help us to dampen threats of splitting. I want to encourage us to hold together. Supporting Faith and Practice is what we expect all our churches to do. A marriage relationship normalizes and protects. But a marriage within a church. To affirm within our churches a gay or lesbian marriage is to affirm dating. Dating can't happen without exploration. So to affirm dating is to affirm exploration. We have to discourage sexual experimentation. Talked about polygamy, polyamory, promiscuity. Same sex marriage is not the last issue coming down the pipe.

C Whorton, Klamath Falls – to exclude people from certain parts of the yearly meeting is not loving. I want to be more loving than that. I have problems with that question but understand. Not what is best for the yearly meeting but where is God leading us. I don't see these as one and the same. What could be best for the yearly meeting is affiliate membership. But what is God saying to us in this time and in this place? We prolong our pain. We prolong or put off what God would have us do. We delay becoming the people God would have us become. Julie, I can only say that your longing to be in community, I think God will hear that prayer. That's not my hope. That's just true.

B Bosnjak, Hillsboro – Some of the recommendations sound respectful but don't feel to my heart as respectful. They feel like punishment. If you do not believe the way I believe, there will be consequences. We must look deeply at our own intention. Is that kind of punitive stance residing within us? My sister and I have been split for 20 years – conflict, hurt. We both survive, but there are consequences. It feels hopeless, like there may not be reconciliation. Keeping our yearly meeting – when we talk of splitting or expelling members – the pain won't leave easily. The chance to go back and mend it isn't guaranteed.

L Ankeny, Homedale – spoke briefly (I was distracted and didn't catch his comments)

Tj Warren, Star – God can work through this. It pains me to see people go through consequences.

Sometimes we have to go through that to get to the other side. Knowing the elders we have, I know what they've been through.

S Todd, Clackamas Park – read a passage from scripture. Clackamas Park supports the decision of the elders.

J Fodge, Peninsula – We are in agreement that it's the act, not the desire; but the act is not the problem, it's the desire that leads to the act. His design is one man, one woman, until death separates them.

Any other interpretation is a rejection of God's design. The only way forward that I see possible is for them to separate and develop their own Faith and Practice.

J Hawthorne, Olympic View – I'm interested in the yearly meeting staying together. But what's best for the yearly meeting is what's best for any Christian. Reflect the face of Christ. That would be really good for the yearly meeting. The statement on human sexuality in Faith and Practice. The elders themselves recognized that the yearly meeting is not in agreement on that section. It's not frozen.

There is one, even Christ Jesus, who can speak to my condition. I think it is appropriate and proper that Faith and Practice reflect the leadings and whisperings of the Holy Spirit to this body. The section on human sexuality does not. The Faith and Practice is not intended to be a document forever frozen by those who got there first. It doesn't reflect where the body's been led. But we aren't moving on it.

J Lujan, Caldwell – The elders worked for years with West Hills. I trust them because they're us. We did hard work because we are the yearly meeting and the elders are part of us. I support their decision. They either need to make a decision to realign or go away.

A Joplin, Spokane – my heart is not clear because I haven't told you who I am. I haven't told you how this experience is affecting me. Shared story of accepting Jesus into her heart at age 5. Raised in Plymouth Brethren church. Staff on Campus Crusade. Faith in Christ destroyed by sexism experienced. God is the rewarder of those who diligently seek him. But I didn't diligently seek God. God diligently sought me. Husband died of suicide. Daughter contracted cancer. But God never let me go. I had to stop believing that all my prayers were going to get answered. I don't think two adults in a loving relationship are in sin. I think they can sin just like I can sin. There are some Christians who love the Lord and who do not find committed, same-sex relationships sinful. I am not covering for someone's sin. I am not making an excuse for someone's sin. God gives them what God gives them. God even gives them relationships. I came as a witness. There are people who do not agree with expelling West Hill Friends. I have been shattered by what I have heard. And I am going to have a really hard time continuing forward in a meeting that can expel someone. I'm a Christian, and nobody's going to take that away from me.

J Fodge, Peninsula – Why do we come and say Lord, Lord, and do not do what he says?

K Beebe, Netarts – If there is a split, that it happen in as careful and caring a way as possible. Those who can align with the current Faith and Practice and those who align with another. What do we do with our stuff is the hardest question. Our individual properties should stay with whatever congregation where they currently are. It gets a little trickier when we try to figure out what to do with our organizations that we share together. It feels like that really is the way forward. Not try to kick each other out but instead allow each of us to align with one or the other.

Came back from the lunch break. Brad shared his hope that we can find unity. Opened our time with prayer.

L Holt, North Valley – That started a conversation in 1998 at Reedwood. Reedwood put together a process, and we did really good listening. We were told by the superintendent that we would not bring this to the larger yearly meeting. At that time, West Hills had started their process. But they

were faithful to continue the conversation. We were going to have a human sexuality conversation. But that never happened. It turned into a decision about West Hills. So we're still waiting. Because the yearly meeting is not in unity. The question might be better, "What is God leading us to?" I have gay and lesbian friends, and I hear God from them. Our relationship with God isn't static. Our relationship with each other isn't static. How do we stay in relationship with people that we love? We have been committed to unity. It would break my heart and grieve my spirit to think that we as a yearly meeting could not find a way forward.

A Lawrence, Spokane – all the parts of the body have to work together in order for healing to happen. There are three ways we can go forward: 1) stand by the decision of the elders, 2) say that Faith and Practice is a living document, 3) God loves diversity; this is our chance to illustrate that. Making WH an affiliate allows in power only those who say they're right.

E Hibbs, North Seattle – the Bible says a lot about love. Read from 1 Corinthians 13. Love is synonymous with perseverance. Pushing West Hills away would not be persevering to find a way to keep them in that love.

P Anderson, North Valley – sexual ethics will always be the most intense of ethics. One could argue that Paul was OK with long-term, monogamous incest; but Paul says no, that cannot be allowed to stand in the church. Public infractions against moral standards, that breeds a problem.

S Czarnecki, Newberg – what might be best for the yearly meeting might be the exercise we did at the beginning: focus on common ground.

P Smith, Newberg – prayed aloud. Asked Jesus for help getting through our apparent impasse.

C Parker, Eugene – shared about an interaction with Beth Banham during the morning break. There has been a tension in our relationships. City's Edge represents one end of our spectrum, and Eugene has come to represent the other side. The two of them agreed that the question we're discussing doesn't get us any closer to solving our present impasse. And when we come into a room, it's easier to turn away than to turn toward each other. If we keep on going as we are, every time we get together there's going to be tension. Wouldn't it be nice if we could be set free to do the things each of us feel God has called us to do? To be able to pray for each other and bless each other, to accept the fact that we're not going to be able to see things the same way. A hope has been birthed recently within me that if we can find an amicable way to separate organizational paths, setting our brothers and sisters free, if we could bless each other, that this would put us miles and miles ahead of where we are now.

Retha McCutchen spoke of her work as our superintendent, visiting our churches, working alongside people. She wants us to stay together, and she thinks she could do that, but she recognizes that there are those of us here who cannot. It's not an easy divide. It sounds to me like staying together is not an option. On our biblical basis, we disagree. In many of our churches there are people on all sides who've agreed to stay together. The value of being in worship together is more important than my interpretation of scripture. If we were to split this yearly meeting. Indiana. North Carolina. Those have been very damaging. I don't want us to do that to one another. So our Faith and Practice allows for a way for a new yearly meeting to start. If churches gather together they can petition to start a new yearly meeting. Could you agree to go home and ask your area to start a new yearly meeting that would be in agreement? I don't mean we have Northwest Yearly meeting and an associate yearly meeting. Could you go home and ask your area if your area could join together to start a yearly meeting? If an area had consensus to start a yearly meeting, then setting that area apart would be less divisive than making some sort of decision at the top about these churches are going here and those churches are going there and come back to midyear boards and say we're going to do this. There would be a lot of work. But then churches could join that area that's unanimous. It could take time. We're talking years here. Could we even think like that? My heart breaks, thinking about separating. And I don't want anyone to

think I'm saying we have NWYM here and somebody else here, not the same. Can we agree to go home and see if that's a way forward?

K Morse, Star – Are we considering the Faith and Practice to stand as is?

Retha – The area would decide. Other areas would have to do the same. It's not perfect.

B Kelley, Rosedale – The least painful way may be to separate. But an area may not be able to do that.

What if we set up a yearly meeting for those who aren't in harmony with current Faith and Practice.

B Moormann, Lynwood – We could create an area meeting that's not geographically defined but that's ideologically defined in order to begin this process.

#### BRAD EXPLAINED THE CONCEPT FOR REPRESENTATIVES

B Bosnjak, Hillsboro – I'm encouraged by the idea of beginning the conversation. I'm praying we will not feel rushed to do this.

K Beebe, Netarts – The general direction we're talking makes a lot of sense. Structurally we need to be really careful here. Instead of using our current Faith and Practice to make this work, wouldn't it be possible for this group to decide we're going to dissolve this yearly meeting and create two new yearly meetings instead?

Retha – Clarified her thinking

P Anderson, North Valley – I want to speak against these possibilities with all the strength that I have.

That would diminish our yearly meeting. It would not further the kingdom of God. I would advise against considering that as an option. I think we are in far more agreement than in disagreement. I think we should hang together.

P Meier, East Hill – I think we're premature in talking about setting up different divisions of the yearly meeting. That's not what we were sent here to do. I think we need to make that decision on elders report.

P Krueger, Lynwood – We're going to get pretty upset on things involving the camp and things involving the college. Our yearly meeting is small. We don't have a lot of staff. If we divide, don't we just continue to weaken? Is there another yearly meeting that more closely aligns with one of the other? What other yearly meetings are there around that would more closely align with our Faith and Practice or with the potential changes?

A Baker, North Valley – Told us a little about North Pacific Yearly Meeting.

D Brown, Caldwell – I think we affirm our yearly meeting. I don't think there's any desire to remove ourselves from the Northwest Yearly Meeting. We're not looking to start a new yearly meeting. We are happy with the Faith and Practice of our current yearly meeting. We would like to see the yearly meeting continue.

B Kelley, Rosedale – I was in favor of splitting the yearly meeting. But after hearing Friends speak, it's beginning to sound practically like this will not stand.

C Hudson, North Seattle – Faith and Practice should reflect where we are. What about women in ministry? There is unequal attention given to some issues.

Brad clarified that West Hills came to us years and years ago when Joe Gerick was superintendent. They came to us.

#### AFTER A BREAK, BRAD OPENED OUR TIME BACK IN PRAYER

C Heath, Peninsula – The purpose for us is to affirm or overturn the elders' decision. Peninsula Friends definitely wants to affirm the decision of the elders.

B Bosnjak, Hillsboro – We would not affirm the elders' decision. We do affirm discussion of other ways forward. We believe there are other options.

A Baker, North Valley – If we were to affirm the elders' decision, would we still have some kind of relationship with West Hills?

T Bartell, Talent – Have all the representatives from each church spoken?

J Baker, Netarts – I believe we are all trying to be a people of conscience. Our polity is connectional.  
Netarts wants to affirm the elders' decision.

D Reimer, Rosedale – It's the position of Rosedale to support the position of our elders.

P Paz, Meridian – Our church has affirmed the elders decision, but we could not come to a solution

Ron Myers was prevented from speaking. This was later corrected.

J Harrison, Entiat – Youth are diverse. The yearly meeting is going through hurt. I wonder what yearly meeting I'm going to be able to

C Brandt, Sherwood – Sherwood Friends stands with the elders

J Lemmons, Rose Valley – We are in support of the elders. We need to come to a conclusion.

B Banham, City's Edge – The decision about West Hills is not in focus at City's Edge. We really value authenticity and integrity. We want to see a yearly meeting that reflects our faith and practice. That's why I talk about a second yearly meeting.

J Geil, Vancouver – I get the sense that we are in favor of the elders' decision for the most part. I have so appreciated these last two days. I see in this room men and women who are so dedicated to resolving the situation that we've given up a weekend and traveled through terrible weather to get here.

J Buckley, South Salem – we do affirm the elders' decision unless there was discernment on our part that there was a spiritual need for waiting on the Spirit. We are recommending that we affirm the elders.  
"Remove a duplicitous heart so that you may fear God."

K Morse, Star – we have to rely on scripture. The heart is deceitful. We must test the decisions that we're making. We must test the emotions. Faith and Practice is intended to set out the interpretation of scripture. We have to affirm the decision of the elders.

S Posey, Crossroads – affirms the elders' decision

R Myers, Camas – We were told to go home, to read, to pray, to discuss, and come back (illustrating our current discussion with an example from a board on which he served). The third year, we were able to come to unity. It was a lesson to me. It sometimes takes quite a bit of seasoning and prayer and work to come to unity.

M Fawver, Newberg – An important part of the process is that if the gathered body does not see that what the officers or elders or the people in the smaller discernment process has brought back can be agreed upon, then it is OK to question it. Me questioning the elders' decision is not me saying they can't hear from God. That's not my intent.

D Thomas, Newberg – For the sake of the yearly meeting, going with the elders' decision is the most favorable but our church at Newberg Friends is divided. We need lots of discussion and continued study. I don't know as a representative how to represent that we're divided.

B Hutchins, Metolius – Metolius Friends supports the elders' decision, but I don't know what that means for us as a yearly meeting.

L Cortez, Silverton – We are very divided at Silverton. We did a book study and a lot of Bible studies. It's created a lot of change in many people. A lot of spiritual formation changes.

J Bannister, Newberg – We're not in consensus at NFC, so I've been given permission to speak my own conscience. I've seen youth stumble because of it. I want to honor the elders and the work that they've done, but my biggest fear is that after this decision, we stop having conversations. We stop talking. We let this issue go. I don't want that. We should keep talking. Discussing about faith and practice. About where we go from here to bring reconciliation for everyone.

P Harrison, Entiat – We stand with the elders' decision.

T Walker, Hillsboro, asked that we sing "Bind Us Together" chorus. E White, Meridian, led out.

Brad clarified that we'll be taking "approve" "not approve" "neutral" responses to the question of whether to affirm the elders' report regarding the release of West Hills. People responded to the questions. Taking a 5-minute break.

The clerks are in agreement that we are divided and did not reach consensus with the questions before us. We sense that we do agree that the elders did the best they could with the decision they made. The administrative council had already made provision on how to proceed if we were unable to reach consensus on a way forward during this weekend. The Administrative Council will take the discussion up again before mid-year boards and report to the representatives at mid-year boards regarding how we are going to answer question #4.