FAITH AND PRACTICE

North Pacific Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends
Faith and Practice
Third edition

North Pacific Yearly Meeting
of the Religious Society of Friends

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Kehrnan Shaw
Bridge City Meeting
Faith and Practice is the name given to a reference book compiled by each yearly meeting that contains the collective wisdom of the community, including queries and guidelines intended to support individual and corporate faithful living.

Catherine Whitmire, 2007

Historically, as Friends conducted their business and wrote down their decisions, they noted points where they were clearly and consistently able to see how to proceed. These records did not become inflexible rules, but were revised as needed in new circumstances and following new Guidance. Over the years, Friends created documents that served both as records and as guides. They often called such a document a “book of discipline.”

The word “discipline” in this context has two meanings. The first relates to how one lives a religious or spiritual life by following one’s inner leadings and adhering to practices or teachings to which one is committed. It was in this sense of loyalty and commitment that Jesus’s followers were known as his Disciples.

The second meaning relates to the conduct of the affairs of the religious body, i.e., corporate rather than individual discipleship. Such discipline describes the system of order by which the religious body seeks to remain true to its principles and to help its adherents remain true. It is a system of order chosen as a conscious alternative to the religious anarchy that can occur when impulse is the basis of decision and individuals or groups move on their own
tangents without benefit of the discoveries and procedures that have been tested over time.

A Quaker book of discipline, also called Faith and Practice, reflects both of these meanings as it sets forth the attitudes and experiences of Friends as guideposts to be considered prayerfully and carefully, and the practices which Friends meetings have tested and revised over the years. Each edition reflects the attitudes, the experiences, and the unique approach to Quaker life of a particular body of Friends at a particular time. Yearly meetings typically revise their books of discipline every generation.

In 1656 the elders of the Meeting at Balby in Yorkshire, England, drafted a collection of advices to which they added a postscript:

*Dearly beloved Friends, these things we do not lay upon you as a rule or form to walk by, but that all, with the measure of light which is pure and holy, may be fulfilled in the Spirit, not from the letter, for the letter killeth, but the Spirit giveth life.*

Modern Friends still aspire to use Faith and Practice with this attitude in mind. In her 94th year, Jane Palen Rushmore spoke similarly, but in a different metaphor:

*The teachings of our Quaker forefathers were intended to be landmarks, not campsites.*

**About this Edition of NPYM’s Faith and Practice**

The Faith and Practice of North Pacific Yearly Meeting (NPYM) is an evolving document. This third edition reflects the growing experience of NPYM Friends as we seek to follow the Inner Light. Members and attenders are urged to read and use the book in that Light.

The intent of the book is to be descriptive, not prescriptive. The Faith & Practice Committee took pains to make the tone of this edition of the NPYM Faith and Practice less directive than it had been. While it is still intended as a reference for “what do we do when . . . ?” the book now notes a range of possibilities when different meetings have different practices around a given issue.
Readers familiar with earlier editions will notice that this edition puts topics in a different order. The Faith & Practice Committee used two general organizing principles:

1. To the extent possible, put everything about one topic in one place;
2. Order the topics generally “inward to outward.” Part I groups material first by spiritual disciplines that Friends use to come closer to the divine Center, then by outward manifestations of an inwardly transformed life which are further grouped around our main testimonies. Part II focuses on corporate practices, starting with the basic unit of the monthly meeting.

This edition includes new topics requested by NPYM Friends, such as sections on silence, ministry, and creativity in Chapter 3, “Friends Spiritual Disciplines,” and expanded material on clearness and support committees, conflict within meetings, leadership, and challenges in pastoral care in Chapter 5, “The Monthly Meeting.”

**Quotations.** Unless otherwise noted, this *Faith and Practice* quotes from the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible. The Faith & Practice Committee chose this translation for readability and inclusive language. There are many Bible translations and paraphrases available, and Friends are encouraged to read widely among them.

Quotations in this *Faith and Practice* are from Scripture or from Quaker sources. NPYM Friends find inspiration from a multitude of faith traditions and spiritual practices, and it would be impossible to quote from all of them even-handedly in these pages.

**Gender Pronouns.** Reflecting our yearly meeting’s rising awareness of gender fluidity and inclusion, this edition of the NPYM *Faith and Practice* uses “they” in the usual plural sense and also in a singular sense when necessary to refer to an individual without any assumption about that individual’s gender identity. That is, where readers might expect to see “a clerk decides when he or she will …” they will instead see either “clerks decide when they will …” or “a clerk decides when they will …”
Diverse and Inclusive Language. This book of discipline of North Pacific Yearly Meeting reflects the range of spiritual disciplines, faiths, and practices that are drawn upon by those in this one group, one of many in the Religious Society of Friends.

Friends are diverse in spiritual experience, with perhaps as many varieties of spirituality as there are Friends. In an effort to be respectful of each other, and to avoid conflict, we sometimes avoid talking about our spiritual experiences with other Friends. We may avoid words that we think may offend others, or we may expect others to avoid certain terminology so as not to feel offended ourselves. In either case we stifle our voices and the depth of our worship, and limit the vitality of our meetings.

Friends in our yearly meeting use many words and phrases to describe the divine life and power at the heart of the universe, including the Divine Principle, Energy, the Eternal, God, the Ground of all Being, the Holy Spirit, the Infinite, the Inward (or Inner) Light, the Light of Christ, the Living God, Lord, Presence, the Seed, the Source, Spirit, Truth, the Word. All such terms are weak attempts to convey the inexpressible.

Appreciating this spiritual diversity and acknowledging the inadequacy of words, this Faith and Practice uses a variety of terms to indicate the object of our reverence. In reading this book, Friends may find themselves comforted or challenged by a particular name for the Divine. Readers can be warned – or reassured – that a different surprise can be found a few pages farther on. With the diversity of readers inside and outside our yearly meeting, it would be impractical to pursue exact equality in the language. The goal is not that Faith and Practice conform to every reader’s notions of what “should be,” but that all of us are able to see ourselves in the book.

The Inward Light is a universal light given to all ..., religious consciousness itself being basically the same wherever it is found. Our difficulties come when we try to express it. We cannot express; we can only experience God. Therefore we must always remember tolerance, humility, and tenderness with others whose ways and views may differ from ours.

Pacific Yearly Meeting, 1953
We pray for your tenderness of heart to listen beyond the imperfect words we are using to describe what the Living Spirit has done among us.... We know that the Truth is beyond any words we might use to describe it.

Epistle from Quakercamp at Stillwater, 2007

One vessel, but many lives swirling around the boiled pot ‘till they are poured into our separate entities, [each cup] reaching out to accept their living grace.

Brianna (Richardson) Rossi, 2012

We will practice speaking our individual and communal experiences of the Inner Life, in the language that comes authentically from that experience, and listening to the variety of spiritual experience present, with ears ready to hear “where words come from.”

Lake Erie Yearly Meeting, 2012
Lucy Garnett
Salmon Bay Meeting
Chapter 1

History

[It] was Justice Bennet of Derby who first called us Quakers because we bid them tremble at the word of God, and that was in the year 1650.

George Fox, 1675

[The Pacific Coast Association of Friends] is not a movement, a new denomination, nor another Yearly Meeting. It is not an official spokesman for the Society of Friends nor any branch of the Society on the Pacific Coast. It is a banding together through mutual interest and concern of all Friends and others in sympathy with Friends’ principles. Each person may become a member upon his [or her] own affirmation, and each meeting or group may affiliate with the association or not as they may elect. The association does not seek to commit its members nor the affiliated groups to any set of stated principles or creeds. Each member is free to make his or her own testimony, and without the stigma of vacillation, to grow in grace according to his [or her] own inner light.

William Lawrence, 1934

The movement that became the Religious Society of Friends arose in seventeenth-century England after the height of the Puritan revolution. This was a period of great religious ferment and seeking. Old church forms were being questioned, and many people were reading the Bible for the first time. Quakers sought through direct experience with the Divine to rediscover the intensity, life, and power of the early Christians.
George Fox, a founder of the Quaker movement, was born in 1624 in Leicestershire in the heart of the Midlands in England. His parents were both Puritans of humble origins. George was early apprenticed to a shoemaker who also dealt in sheep and cattle. In his boyhood, George resolved to be honest in all things. He went on to reject all double standards of living. After much Bible study and travel about the country seeking help and comfort from ministers and members of established religious sects, he had an experience at the age of 23 that he later described in his journal:

> And when all my hopes in [priests and preachers] and in all men were gone, so that I had nothing outwardly to help me, nor could tell what to do, then, O then, I heard a voice which said, “There is one, even Christ Jesus, that can speak to thy condition,” and, when I heard it my heart did leap for joy.

During the next five years, Fox traveled throughout England gathering small groups of like-minded people. These early Quakers had a remarkable sense of mission: having had a personal encounter with Christ, they felt compelled to share it with all who would listen. George Fox and his followers, known now as the Valiant Sixty, traveled all over England, Wales, Scotland, and Ireland. Friends visited Holland, Germany, and France, and Mary Fisher visited the Sultan of the Ottoman Empire (1658). During this period, thousands of Friends were imprisoned and hundreds died for their beliefs.

As the movement grew, the basic structure of the Religious Society of Friends took shape, with groups of worshippers organized into monthly meetings, quarterly meetings, and yearly meetings — so named according to how often they met to conduct their community business.

Beginning in 1655 many Quakers traveled to the English colonies in the Americas, eventually winning the struggle for religious toleration in New England and Virginia. Friends meetings were established in all the colonies. Fox and twelve other Friends visited Maryland in 1672 and traveled to all the Quaker centers there. Groups of Friends settled in New Jersey in the mid-1670s and in Pennsylvania after 1681, when King Charles II granted

Friends established yearly meetings in many of the colonies, but distances between them were great and Friends continued to look to London Yearly Meeting for guidance more than to neighboring colonies. Nevertheless there was much intervisitation among Friends by traveling ministers. This was supplemented by the writing of letters and epistles that were widely circulated among Friends. Although education was not as highly prized on the frontier as in urban areas, Quakers established a number of elementary schools and raised the level of literacy in the colonies.

Slavery was an issue for colonial Friends from at least 1688 when Germantown Friends, near Philadelphia, minuted an advice against the slave trade. In the 1700s, John Woolman and other concerned Friends aroused Quaker consciences on the matter. The subject continued to be raised, and by 1776 most yearly meetings had directed members neither to buy or sell slaves, nor to accept them as gifts. Many Quakers struggled with whether or not to violate laws making it illegal to assist slaves to escape, but nevertheless during the 1800s many participated in the Underground Railroad movement, assisting slaves escaped from the South to freedom in the North.

The colonies’ various yearly meetings developed informal rules of order that were eventually reduced to writing and copies made for the use of quarterly meetings. Parts of these were printed from time to time. Eventually Philadelphia Yearly Meeting prepared an official Extracts from the Minutes and Advices that it distributed to its constituent monthly meetings.

The withdrawal of Friends in America from government and society in general, the “Quiet Period” in the Religious Society of Friends, began during the French and Indian Wars (1754-1763). In 1756, Quakers ceded political control in Pennsylvania to secular authorities due to the increasing number of compromises with their faith required of Quakers who remained in government.
In this period many Friends came to rely more on tradition and truth as revealed to previous generations rather than remaining open to continuing revelation. Nor were American Quakers immune to the influence of the democratic ideas contained in the Declaration of Independence, the liberal religious philosophy of the French Revolution, and, conversely, the religious movement of evangelism that was spreading through the land. This combination of factors led to some divisions among Quakers – and eventually to the growth of Independent Friends and to the formation of North Pacific Yearly Meeting.

Beginning in the 1820s, the unity among North American Friends that had endured almost 200 years began to come apart. In 1827 Elias Hicks broke with new trends in Quaker belief that called for a need for personal conversion, emphasized the authority of scripture and church teaching, and believed in salvation through Jesus Christ. Hicks believed the efficacy of the Inner Light was most important, and that true Quakers elevated the Inner Light (continuing personal Divine revelation) above scripture and church teaching. Those who disagreed with “Hicksite” thinking were termed “Orthodox” Quakers. In 1845 a further separation occurred when followers of Joseph Gurney split away from Orthodox Quakers in the eastern U.S. The “Gurneyites” believed in biblical and church authority coupled with the Inner Light. Many Gurneyites moved west and formed new Quaker meetings.

An intense wave of spiritual revivalism swept the United States beginning in the 1850s. The Revival Movement affected all the Protestant denominations and had a profound influence on Quakerism as well. In 1872 Iowa Yearly Meeting (Gurneyite) granted official recognition to the underlying theology of revivalism. Over time, this led to abandoning plain dress, plain speech, and silence in worship. First Day scripture schools were established. Ministers and the authority of church teaching and scripture were emphasized even more. Altars were installed in Quaker places of worship and music was introduced into services. Individuals were required to be “converted” and then “sanctified” in order to preserve their membership. The concept of the Inner Light fell into the background.
Iowa Yearly Meeting’s official adoption of revivalism distressed many Iowa Quakers. Things came to a head in 1877 when 60 Iowa Friends called for separation. Similar events occurred in Western and Kansas Yearly Meetings. By coincidence Joel Bean became clerk of Iowa Yearly Meeting in 1877. He and his wife Hannah were already enrolled ministers in Iowa Yearly Meeting. Bean was opposed to the changes wrought by revivalism, but he did not believe in separation. Instead he wrote articles in prominent Quaker publications opposing the changes. Ultimately, rather than separate from Iowa Yearly Meeting, the Beans moved to California in 1882. There, they became involved with the San Jose Monthly Meeting which was part of Honey Creek Quarterly Meeting of Iowa Yearly Meeting.

San Jose Monthly Meeting did not escape the controversies swirling around the new revivalist practices. The meeting was divided between those who accepted revivalist changes and those, like the Beans, who did not. The meeting split. Eventually Iowa Yearly Meeting dissolved the San Jose Meeting and refused to recognize the new College Park Monthly Meeting which the Beans and others established. In the midst of this process, Iowa Yearly Meeting also withdrew its recognition of the Beans as ministers. Undaunted, the Beans inaugurated the College Park Association of Friends in 1889.

The founding premise of College Park was the ideal of radical inclusiveness – it was a loose confederation of Friends of all religious backgrounds. Its founders, including the Beans, did not come from the Liberal or Hicksite branch of Friends, often regarded as more universalist in belief with a tradition of unprogrammed, or silent, worship in meetings without pastors. Rather, as noted, the Beans came west as members of the Iowa Yearly Meeting, which identified with the Gurneyite branch of Quakerism.

The College Park Association allowed Friends to retain membership in their own meetings while attending at College Park. The goal was to be completely independent from any of the yearly meetings, each of which was identified with one faction or another within the Society. The five governing principles of the Association were:
1. **Doctrine**: Friends believe in the continuing reality of the Living Christ, available to all seeking souls.

2. **Worship**: The worship of God is held in spirit and in truth and shall be held on a basis of the leadership of the Holy Spirit.

3. **Ministry**: All members and attenders are free to participate vocally in meetings, under a sense of God’s presence.

4. **Manner of Living**: Friends are advised to conduct their private lives with simplicity and directness, ever sensitive to the world’s needs and eager to engage in service.

5. **Relation to the State**: Friends are urged to feel their responsibility to the nation, and at the same time to recognize their oneness with humanity everywhere, regardless of race or nation, abstaining from all hatred.

In 1921, Howard Brinton married Anna Cox, a granddaughter of Joel and Hannah Bean. Together, the young couple carried on the Bean tradition of active involvement in Quakerism. They urged the gathering together of independent Quaker meetings on the west coast. By 1930, 30 other independent Quaker meetings had been formed in the Pacific region. Eventually these formed the Pacific Coast Association of Friends which met annually beginning in 1931 and included meetings in Oregon, Washington, and British Columbia. The principles of the Association are set forth in the quotation at the beginning of this chapter. The groups engaged in cooperative projects and supported the relatively newly formed American Friends Service Committee. Howard Brinton became the first clerk of the group and the editor of its publication, *Friends Bulletin* (now *Western Friend*).

University Friends Meeting (UFM) became a monthly meeting in 1940 as part of Puget Sound Quarterly Meeting of Indiana Yearly Meeting. It evolved from the Friends Center near the University of Washington, founded in 1937 by Friends from Friends Memorial Church (now North Seattle Friends Church), to provide outreach to young people and with a concern about the war on the horizon. UFM remained a member of Indiana Yearly Meeting until 1946, when University Friends joined others in proposing to establish
a new yearly meeting consisting of west coast Quakers from the Pacific Coast Association of Friends. Pacific Yearly Meeting, as the new organization was known, was Christ-centered and God-centered in orientation. Friends also noted its universalist character and confirmed the practice of unprogrammed worship with no recorded ministers. The standard for membership was readiness and desire to join in the common effort to seek and follow the Inner Light. There was less emphasis on theology and greater emphasis on peace and social concerns, such as race relations, arising out of the testimonies.

As Pacific Yearly Meeting grew, it became apparent that the northern part of its area would be better served by an additional yearly meeting. By 1970, the Pacific Northwest and Willamette Quarterly Meetings began to explore whether to hold an annual meeting of friends in the Pacific Northwest. At a 1971 gathering at University Friends Meetinghouse, the two quarterly meetings scheduled a North Pacific Gathering of Friends for the following year. Of the nine monthly meetings consulted at the Gathering (Corvallis, Eastside, Eugene, Multnomah, Salem, Tacoma, University, Vancouver, and Victoria), only Victoria did not agree to the formation of North Pacific Yearly Meeting. Victoria, and two years later, Vancouver, left North Pacific Friends to unite with Canadian Yearly Meeting. The remaining monthly meetings approved the following minute: “This North Pacific Gathering of Friends forms the North Pacific Yearly Meeting as of this date, July 17, 1972.” They also agreed that other meetings could join with NPYM as they were led. All the meetings in the Willamette Quarterly Meeting and Pacific Northwest Quarterly Meeting joined. University Friends Meeting kept dual membership with Pacific and North Pacific Yearly Meetings for the time being.

In spite of small numbers and long distances, Quakers in Montana have met together regularly for mutual support and spiritual growth since the 1960s. Montana meetings and worship groups – Billings, Great Falls, Heartland (made up of several worship groups), Missoula – formed the Montana Gathering of Friends (MGOF), which joined North Pacific Yearly Meeting as a quarterly meeting in 1988.
Friends of North Pacific Yearly Meeting expressed an early desire to devote their annual session to the goals of spiritual growth, fellowship, and “preparing witness” – discernment of the yearly meeting’s corporate voice for the concerns of Friends in the region and the world. To further this end, they decided to delegate administrative decision-making to a Steering Committee composed of members from constituent monthly meetings. Friends emphasized a desire to keep the structure of the yearly meeting simple and not to establish any other standing committees. Over the years, Friends addressed several major areas of concern at their Annual Sessions: corporate witness, gay and lesbian rights, affiliation with other Quaker organizations, and, in more recent years, changing the structure of the yearly meeting.

**Corporate Witness.** NPYM Friends have shown the depth of their commitment to Quaker testimonies through their discernment of corporate witness during Annual Sessions. NPYM approved its very first minute of corporate witness to express concern over the condition of young men who were exiles (“young men estranged from their homes”) and prisoners of war in Southeast Asia. As time went on, the Annual Session saw approval of an impressive array of minutes, including:

- Opposing the Trident submarine and missile project (1974);
- Supporting New Zealand Friends for a nuclear-free South Pacific (1975);
- Opposing the death penalty (1978, 1985);
- Encouraging the US and the USSR to stop the arms race (1980);
- Urging understanding and redress for the injustice done to Japanese-Americans during World War II (1981);
- Expressing concern for Friends in Great Britain and Argentina during the Falklands war (1982);
- Supporting refusal to pay for militarism with tax dollars (1983);
- Urging Friends to inform themselves about Indian treaty rights (1984);
• Encouraging meetings to consider offering sanctuary to Central American refugees (1984);
• Endorsing peace tax fund legislation (1985);
• Acknowledging the environmental crisis as a moral and spiritual crisis (1985);
• Opposing military and other aid to the Contras in Nicaragua (1986);
• Expressing solidarity with native peoples of this hemisphere (1991);
• Accepting a challenge to examine ourselves on the issue of racism (1991);
• Supporting gay and lesbian civil rights (1992);
• Expressing regret to the people of Hiroshima and Nagasaki for the US bombing of their cities (1995);
• Speaking out against the United States Army School of the Americas and, later, urging that it be closed down (1995, 2001);
• Expressing concern about the burning of African American churches in the South (1996);
• Supporting legal recognition of same-sex marriage (1997);
• Opposing a march of the Aryan Nations in Coeur d’Alene, Idaho (1998);
• Confirming that we cherish living in harmony with the earth (1998);
• Opposing the bombing and planned invasion of Iraq by the United States, and later, opposing the wars in Iraq (2000, 2002);
• Recognizing global climate change as an urgent moral and spiritual issue (2008);
• Calling for decriminalization of drug use and creating a public health model to achieve reduction of drug abuse (2008);
• Condemning the use of torture by the United States government (2009);
• Urging the United States to adopt an immigration system that respects the fundamental rights and dignity of all (2010);
• Urging that authorization for US use of military force be repealed (2015);
• Declaring NPYM an open and affirming faith community, welcoming all genders (2017).

**Same-Sex Relationships.** An area of deep concern over the years has been same-sex relationships. The concern first arose as the yearly meeting commenced drafting its own book of *Faith and Practice*. Initially NPYM relied on Pacific Yearly Meeting’s *Faith and Practice*, but in 1979 a committee was formed to revise that *Faith and Practice* to better reflect the life of Quakers in the northwest. As the drafting process began, Annual Session was held at a Baptist College where gays and lesbians were asked to remove a sign advertising their meeting. During that Annual Session, Friends affirmed that gay and lesbian Friends were an integral part of the yearly meeting and decided that NPYM could not meet at a location that restricted or rejected any of its members.

In 1986, the Committee on the Discipline presented a draft of the new NPYM *Faith and Practice* at Annual Session. Ultimately, NPYM accepted it as a “living, evolving document,” but could not reach unity on the question whether marriage was defined as between two persons, or between a man and a woman. Monthly meetings throughout the yearly meeting then took up the issue, but Friends did not come to unity on appropriate language. In 1990, at the Annual Session, Friends again took up the question. This time, Friends directed the Committee on the Discipline to change the language that had defined marriage as between a man and a woman and to otherwise revise the chapter to reflect the discernment of Friends at Annual Session.

Separate from the yearly meeting’s revision of *Faith and Practice*, an NPYM minute in 1992 affirmed Friends belief that “the Spirit of God is present in all loving relationships regardless of the genders of those involved” and “endorsed efforts to protect the civil rights of all persons regardless of their sexual orientation.”
Then, in 1993, the Steering Committee approved the revised *Faith and Practice* definition of a committed relationship or marriage as between a “couple,” while noting that some monthly meetings only “find clearness to oversee heterosexual relationships.”

NPYM continued the work of understanding the lives of gay and lesbian Friends. In 1997, NPYM approved a minute supporting the legal recognition of same-sex marriages, noting that “most of the meetings in NPYM have felt called to take the marriages of gay couples and lesbian couples under their care.” In 2004, NPYM approved a further minute opposing “all attempts to deny legal recognition of marriage of same sex couples.”

**Structural Change.** In 1992, NPYM, out of a sense of frustration with the organization’s current operation, formed a Mulling Committee to answer the query, “What is the role and function of yearly meeting?” The following year, Annual Session devoted time to hearing from Friends answering this query. From this, NPYM approved several proposals: to amend *Faith and Practice* to show that the yearly meeting’s central concern would now be the support and encouragement of monthly meetings, worship groups, and individual Friends; to relieve the Steering Committee of the task of planning and carrying out Annual Session and to assign to the planning committee the task of deepening fellowship and a sense of spirit at the Annual Session; and to fund a part-time, paid secretary to the yearly meeting.

NPYM continued the process of discerning its proper structure, especially as it related to the role of the Steering Committee. NPYM had initially established the Steering Committee to conduct the business of NPYM, leaving Annual Session free for discernment on matters of corporate witness and for spiritual renewal. Since its formation NPYM had grown to include over 50 monthly meetings, preparative meetings, and worship groups. In 2003, the presiding clerk called attention to the growing complexity of yearly meeting responsibilities, finances, and affiliations. He pointed out the growing difficulty of filling the positions required to carry out the work of NPYM, as well as the lack of interest among monthly meetings in the issues taken up by the Steering Committee.
Over the next several years, NPYM’s Vision and Structure Committee worked to develop a way forward for the yearly meeting. In 2007, Annual Session approved the committee’s proposal that most of the yearly meeting’s business be conducted during the Annual Session, rather than in Steering Committee meetings. The Steering Committee would now become a Coordinating Committee composed of members appointed by the monthly meetings. There would be three new standing committees: Ministry & Oversight, Peace & Social Concerns, and Youth. NPYM gradually implemented these changes. The Coordinating Committee started its work in 2009.

**Affiliation with Other Quaker Organizations.** As NPYM began life as a yearly meeting, it caringly threshed through many issues and affiliated with Friends World Committee for Consultation and the American Friends Service Committee in 1974. NPYM formally affiliated with Friends Committee on National Legislation in 1978 and with Quaker Earthcare Witness in 2011. NPYM also has maintained consistent support for Friends Peace Teams and with Friends for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer Concerns. Partnership with these larger organizations has remained important for our yearly meeting. NPYM designates and provides travel support for our representatives to these organizations, and hears reports from them at Annual Sessions.

Over the years since its inception, NPYM has recurringly engaged in discernment over whether to affiliate with Friends General Conference. FGC is a Quaker organization, regarded as originating from the Hicksite, or Liberal, branch of Quakers. FGC is affiliated with 12 yearly meetings, some of which are pastoral. However, FGC provides services to all yearly and monthly meetings (whether or not formally affiliated) on request, including traveling ministry, educational materials, and spiritual nurturing programs. FGC also hosts an annual Gathering which rotates to different parts of the country from year to year.

FGC first invited NPYM to affiliate in 1981. After considering the invitation, NPYM found there was little interest in affiliating. In 1995, representatives of FGC visited the NPYM Annual
Session. Two years later, Bruce Birchard, Executive Secretary of FGC, made a brief presentation at Annual Session. NPYM again studied the question of affiliation. In 1997, the Steering Committee concluded that no formal relationship was possible at the time, but that the seasoning process should continue:

*We have learned that some Friends among us have attended FGC gatherings or have other FGC experience which makes them treasure the organization and gives them a strong incentive to have North Pacific Yearly Meeting join. Others cherish our yearly meeting’s independent, non-aligned status and wish to maintain it. Some Friends hope to move towards a more inclusive Society of Friends and do not wish to affiliate with a liberal Friends organization such as Friends General Conference unless we are also willing to affiliate with Friends United Meeting. Still others are concerned about the practical reasons to join or not join FGC. Steering Committee feels led to continue the seasoning process, hoping that, no matter what the outcome we will all learn more about each other and about other Friends’ organizations as we seek Divine guidance for us in this matter.*

In 2006, FGC held its Annual Gathering at Pacific Lutheran University in Tacoma, Washington. Many NPYM Quakers attended and helped put on the Gathering. Subsequent to the Gathering, NPYM again attempted to discern whether to affiliate with FGC. The Coordinating Committee formed an ad hoc committee to study the issue further. Over the next several Annual Sessions, NPYM addressed the ad hoc committee’s recommendation to affiliate with FGC. Friends could not come to unity on affiliation, stating some of the same reasons that existed in 1997. At the Annual Session in 2012, Friends decided to re-examine the nature of affiliation and all ties with other Quaker organizations. The committee was to consider whether closer ties could be established between FGC and NPYM.

**Looking Forward.** The history of the Religious Society of Friends and of North Pacific Yearly Meeting shows Truth moving among us. Our history gives Friends assurance that the Spirit of God will inspire and guide us in our faith and our witness to the world, today and into the future.
Kathy Cope
San Juan Worship Group
For Friends, the inward experience of Truth, for both the individual and the group, is the starting point of faith. Friends’ search for Divine Truth relies primarily on continuing revelation, through individual experience, tested by group discernment in Friends meetings. The local Friends meeting provides a stimulus for and a check on inward experience. Advices and queries are part of Quaker tradition and experience, and religious writings from other spiritual traditions often provide a broader perspective.

**Names.** The name, the Religious Society of Friends, finds its source in Jesus’ words:

>You are my friends, if you do what I command you. I shall not call you servants any more, because a servant does not know his master’s business; I call you friends, because I have made known to you everything I have learnt from my Father.

*John 15:14-15*

The many words and phrases Friends use for the divine life and power at the heart of the universe reflect the diversity of beliefs and variety of experiences among us. What one Friend may understand as the Inward Christ, another Friend may understand as the Ground of Being. Over the centuries, Friends have used many such words and phrases: God, the Eternal, the Truth, the Holy Spirit, the Divine Principle, the Light Within, the Inward (or Inner) Light, the Seed, the Light of Christ, Christ Within, the
Living God, Lord, the Word, Power, True Silence, Spirit, Source, Grace, Presence, and others. All such terms are weak attempts to express the inexpressible — that which is beyond words.

**Sacraments and Creeds.** Friends seek to view all of life as sacramental. Desiring to avoid symbolism that may tend to supplant substance, Friends meetings do not observe outward sacraments, such as water baptism or bread and wine communion. The absence of outward rites and ceremonies affirms the primacy of inward experience and is a stimulus for it.

Similarly, Friends do not rely on formal statements of belief. We do share some common understandings such as the Divine spark within each person and the possibility of continuing revelation. Adherence to a creed is not a test of faith, nor is it required for membership. Rather than indicating a lack of belief, the absence of dogma actually invites and encourages personal responsibility for the discovery of faith. Instead of relying on priests or theologians, we each embrace the discipline and responsibility which enable spiritual transformation. The statements of belief, both in word and in deed, which belong to Friends flow out of lives of service, reflection, and prayer.

*It is not opinion, or speculation, or notions of what is true, or assent to or the subscription of articles and propositions, though never so soundly worded, that … makes … a true believer or true Christian. But it is a conformity of mind and practice to the will of God, in all holiness of conversation, according to the dictates of this Divine principle of Light and Life in the soul which denotes a person truly a child of God.*

*William Penn, 1692*

**Corporate Discernment.** The experience of the Spirit is both individual and communal. Through worship together, ministry in worship, group discussion and discernment, and daily interaction, individuals teach the meeting and the meeting molds and teaches individuals. Light comes to us both directly from the Source and through the meeting as a whole. Friends recognize that there is that of God in everyone and share a common understanding that if we gather together faithfully, Truth will be revealed to us.
**Testimonies, Advices, Queries.** While Friends do not rely on creeds and dogma, there are guides to follow and to measure against. Testimonies are statements of central ethical principles and outward manifestations of the inward transformation that grows out of a living relationship with the Divine. Friends use testimonies as guides and as measuring-sticks in our lives as individuals, in our families, and in our Quaker communities. Testimonies among Friends vary over time according to the life and spirit of each Friends group. For example, the peace testimony has been foundational for many generations of Friends and the earth care (stewardship) testimony is rising in our time. For NPYM today, central testimonies include integrity, community, peace, simplicity, equality, and stewardship. These are described in more depth in Chapter 4, “Friends Testimonies.”

Advices are written reminders of what a life lived in the Spirit might look like. Friends in various yearly meetings have adapted and revised advices according to the Light they are given. Some advices are straightforward suggestions about specific issues of concern to Friends at a particular time; some are wide-ranging challenges for all time.

Similarly, early Friends used queries to ascertain the state of the Society as a whole, both spiritually and practically. The first set of such questions to be asked of monthly meetings was:

- **Which Friends in service to the Society, in their respective regions, departed this life since the last Yearly Meeting?**
- **Which Friends, imprisoned on account of their testimony, died in prison since the last Yearly Meeting?**
- **How among Friends did Truth advance since last Yearly Meeting and how do they fare in relation to peace and unity?**

Friends use queries today to challenge ourselves and to open the way for growth in wisdom. Examples of contemporary queries are:

- **How do we avoid being drawn into violent reactions against those who are destructive of human dignity? Do we reach out to violator as well as violated with courage and love?**
- **In what ways do we honor all living things? Do we seek the holiness**
inherent in the order of nature, the wildness of wilderness, and the richness of the world?

Taken together, the advices and queries are a reminder of the common faith and principles held to be essential to the life and witness of the Religious Society of Friends. Individually and in meetings, Friends consider how the advices and queries affect us personally and communally.

**Scripture.** The Quaker movement began at a time when the Bible had recently come into wide circulation in English, and Friends drew greatly from it. George Fox and other early traveling ministers knew the Bible well, studied it earnestly, and quoted it often.

While affirming the inspiration of the Scriptures, early Friends also emphasized a distinction which has remained important to this day. In the words of the Quaker scholar of the New Testament, Henry Cadbury:

*Divine revelation was not confined to the past. The same Holy Spirit which had inspired the scriptures in the past could inspire living believers centuries later. Indeed, for the right understanding of the past, the present insight from the same Spirit was essential.*

Thus, in emphasizing the power which gave forth the Scriptures and the accessibility of this same power to us today, Friends have avoided making Scripture an infallible guide. Instead we are invited to be drawn into that same Spirit which inspired the Bible and leads to maturing discovery of the Divine. Today, while many Friends still rely on Scripture in our search for continuing revelation, we are also open to writings from a broad array of faith traditions.

**Friends Place in Christianity.** Whether we interpret the Quaker movement as a strand within Protestantism, as a third force distinct from both Protestantism and Catholicism, or as a new and distinct form of spirituality, the movement, both in its origin and in the various branches which have evolved, is rooted in Christianity. Over time, Friends have offered a critique of many forms of Christianity and felt empathy toward people of faith
beyond the bounds of Christianity. Some Friends have placed particular emphasis on the Gospel of Jesus Christ, while others have found more compelling a universal perspective emphasizing the Truth enlightening every person. One of the lessons of Friends history is that an excessive reliance on one or the other of these perspectives is needlessly divisive and diminishes the vitality of the Quaker vision.

The concern of Friends is for this faith and practice to be a living and transforming power in their lives, not a particular verbal formulation. Challenged by the words of Jesus as quoted in Matthew 7:21 – “It is not those who say to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ who will enter the kingdom of heaven, but those who do the will of my Father in heaven” – Friends do not place emphasis on the naming of God. Instead each is encouraged, in John Woolman’s phrase, “to distinguish the language of the pure Spirit which inwardly moves upon the heart.” In the course of following this spiritual path, many Friends come to find great depths of meaning in familiar Christian concepts and language, while others do not. Although sometimes perplexing to the casual observer, these differences do not trouble many seasoned Friends who have discovered a deep unity with one another in the Spirit.

**Nontheist Friends.** A number of Friends in North Pacific Yearly Meeting do not believe in the existence of a deity. This perspective cannot be described fully in a few words. Many nontheist Friends live in awe and wonder of the world, feel deep and mysterious connection to people and nature, and are convinced of the infinite sanctity of life. Nontheist Friends share strong callings to service, to the mystery and power of the gathered meeting, and to the importance of community in spiritual growth. Nontheists are warmly welcomed and valued as members of our Friends meetings.

**Many Voices of Faith.** The Religious Society of Friends is a diverse spiritual family with several branches that have evolved in different directions over the past three and a half centuries. Even amid this diversity, a reading of Quaker literature reveals some similar patterns of belief. But a true understanding of Quaker faith comes from a careful, sustained observation of and participation
in Friends work and ministry. In this way we see the basic underpinnings of our faith even though there are different ways to describe it. This *Faith and Practice* offers signposts to lead us deeper into Friends spiritual life.

_As I had forsaken all the priests, so I left the separate preachers also, and those called the most-experienced people. For I saw there was none among them all that could speak to my condition. And when all my hopes in them and in all men were gone, so that I had nothing outwardly to help me, nor could tell what to do, then, O then, I heard a voice which said “There is one, even Christ Jesus, that can speak to thy condition,” and, when I heard it, my heart did leap for joy. Then the Lord did let me see why there was none upon the earth that could speak to my condition, namely, that I might give him all the glory. For all are concluded under sin and shut up in unbelief, as I had been, that Jesus Christ might have the preeminence, who enlightens, and gives grace and faith and power. Thus, when God doth work, who shall let it? And this I knew experimentally…_

_George Fox, 1647_

_And so he [Fox] went on and said, How that Christ was the Light of the world and lighteth every man that cometh into the world; and that by this Light they might be gathered to God, etc. And I stood up in my pew, and I wondered at his doctrine, for I had never heard such before. And then he went on, and opened the Scriptures, and said, “The Scriptures were the prophets’ words and Christ’s and the apostles’ words, and what as they spoke they enjoyed and possessed and had it from the Lord.” And said, “Then what had any to do with the Scriptures, but as they came to the Spirit that gave them forth. You will say, Christ saith this, and the apostles say this, but what canst thou say?” … This opened me so that it cut me to the heart…. And I cried in my spirit to the Lord, “We are all thieves, we are all thieves, we have taken the Scriptures in words and know nothing of them in ourselves.”_

_Margaret Fell, 1652_

_The first gleam of light, “the first cold light of morning” which gave promise of day with its noontide glories, dawned on me one day at Meeting, when I had been meditating on my state in great depression. I seemed to hear the words articulated in my spirit, “Live up to the light thou hast, and more will be granted thee.”_

_Caroline Fox, 1882_
Experience is the Quaker’s starting-point. This light must be my light, this truth must be my truth, this faith must be my very own faith. The key that unlocks the door to the spiritual life belongs not to Peter, or some other person, as an official. It belongs to the individual soul, that finds the light, discovers the truth, that sees the revelation of God and goes on living in the demonstration and power of it.

Rufus Jones, 1927

The best type of religion is one in which the mystical, the evangelical, the rational, and the social are so related that each exercises a restraint on the others. Too exclusive an emphasis on mysticism results in a religion which is individualistic, subjective, and vague; too dominant an evangelicalism results in a religion which is authoritarian, creetal, and external; too great an emphasis on rationalism results in a cold intellectual religion which appeals only to the few; too engrossing a devotion to the social gospel results in a religion which, in improving the outer environment, ignores defects in the inner life which cause the outer disorder. In Quakerism the optimum is not equality in rank of the four elements. The mystical is basic. The Light Within occasions the acceptance or rejection of a particular authority, reason, or service.

Howard Brinton, 1952

What is the Quaker faith? It is not a tidy package of words which you can capture at any given time and then repeat weekly at a worship service. It is an experience of discovery which starts the discoverer on a journey which is life-long. The discovery in itself is not uniquely the property of Quakerism. It is as old as Christianity, and considerably older if you share the belief that many have known Christ who have not known His name. What is unique to the Religious Society of Friends is its insistence that the discovery must be made by each man for himself. No one is allowed to get it secondhand by accepting a ready-made creed. Furthermore, the discovery points to a path and demands a journey, and gives you the power to make the journey.

Elise Boulding, 1954

There is indeed One that speaks to my condition, but that One may not announce a name, or even speak a word; it may reveal itself as Light, or inner peace, or compassion for humanity. But whatever its manifestation, there is only One. If that One is perceived as a King, then that is a true perception; if it is perceived as a Mother, then that is also a true perception. If I call God
“Holy Mother” and you call God “Divine King,” does that mean there are two Gods? No, there is only One.

That of God within every person is sometimes recognized as the Spirit of Christ, or the Holy Spirit, or the Inner Light. As Friends we accept and respect that Spirit, however perceived, in all people, and particularly in each other. We can give testimony to our own experience, as honestly and faithfully as possible, but we cannot alter another’s spiritual condition. Let us receive Light as it is given to us, and share it as we are able, and trust in the One that can speak to the condition of all people, to care for and guide us all.

Helen Park, 1979

When we turn inside or beyond ourselves to grasp some understanding of the divine, we discover through encounter that what we need to find we will find: a Something creative and renewing, overwhelmingly strong and passive, completely wise and innocent, living and dying, feminine and masculine.

Our father, our mother, our light, which is in heaven and earth, holy is your name. Come.

Patrice Haan, 1983

I am just now beginning to feel comfortable with the realization of a Feminine Spirit as a personal presence. I will continue to work toward centering in Worship, to be open to the Light, its peace and comfort, and maybe then, its message through her voice. I do not search for her. I just know her as the source of my Light.

Molly Barnett, 1983

The spirituality that is real to us finds its inner strength in the mystical experience of connectedness with each other and with the whole of creation. This is the deep, still and vibrant centre that transcends time.

David James & Jillian Wychel, 1991

Each path is unique. Though Zen practice has blessed me greatly, I do not urge others to follow my footsteps.... [M]y Zen journey has helped me to appreciate, from “the outside,” features of Quaker spiritual practice that I had formerly overlooked. Radically understood and faithfully followed, the Society of Friends needs no bolstering by alien traditions; rather, Quakerism is itself a fully sufficient path of transforming spiritual power and grace.

Steve Smith, 2004
When we have made the unreserved plunge into a covenant relationship with God, when we have experienced God directly and personally through that relationship – why then we look up and see God everywhere. My own ability to see and honor and be thankful for the way God is revealed to the followers of all the great religions – Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Taoism and the rest – is enhanced by my own relationship to God as encountered in my own faith tradition is deepened and strengthened.

Lloyd Lee Wilson, 2005

Part of our challenge is to feel the presence of God and movement of Truth and Love. This is not ‘feeling’ as in the modern usage, but a deep inward knowing that is more than intellect and emotion. It allows no space for manipulation of others or falsity. When we feel the inward motion that comes from God rise up in us, then we are rightly led to speak, be it in worship or in daily life.

Margery Post Abbott, 2016
Chapter 3

Friends Spiritual Disciplines

Now, Friends, deal plainly with yourselves, and let the eternal Light search you, and try you, for the good of your souls. For this will deal plainly with you. It will rip you up, and lay you open, and make all manifest which lodges in you; the secret subtlety of the enemy of our souls, this eternal searcher and trier will make manifest. Therefore all to this come, and by this be searched, and judged, and led and guided.

Margaret Fell, 1656

If our concern is with the love of a creating, sustaining, sanctifying, indwelling Spirit for the life and wholeness of the world, we will be caught up and enlivened by images of the Spirit, desiring to break through in reconciling, whole-making love between all people, all beings and all things in the universe. This God is within us, empowering us, flowing out from, to, between us and all things — both immanent and transcendent. ...

To live in the Spirit will mean moving towards being open to those modes of being, thinking, deciding and acting that are empowering from within rather than controlling from without for ourselves and for our neighbors.

Margaret Bearlin, 1984

The Religious Society of Friends … is about nothing if it’s not about transformation. Helping each other open to the Living Christ among us, allowing ourselves to be searched by the Light at work within us, humbling ourselves to be taught by the Inward Teacher, trusting that surrendering to the Refiner’s Fire, we can be given new hearts. And it is and always has been through these new hearts that we are made channels for the Motion of Universal Love.

Noah Baker Merrill, 2012
Through years of experience, Friends have discovered practices and disciplines that are helpful in developing and living our spirituality, both as individuals and as a spiritual community.

Friends practice a variety of spiritual disciplines. One discipline may illuminate one part of life, and another, yet another part. Altogether, they connect us to the grounding center from which we draw our strength and inspiration, and which opens us to transformation.

Friends may call this center God, Spirit, some other name, or no name at all. Some Friends understand that this center is a part of the constitution of every individual and develops there on its own; still others are not yet aware of their access to the Divine.

Advices and Queries. Advices gather the wisdom and experience of Friends; queries are used for personal or group reflection. Many meetings read and consider one or several queries, along with appropriate advices or other material, during meeting for worship, meeting for business, worship-sharing, or other gatherings. Some meetings record their responses to the queries. Meetings may also use the queries as a basis for their annual State of Society reports. Meeting committees may find certain queries helpful in evaluating their activities. Meetings often publish the queries regularly in their newsletters.

In this Faith and Practice, many advices are phrased as descriptions of how Friends live lives centered in the Spirit. The reader will find advices and queries on specific topics throughout this chapter and the next.

See also Chapter 2, “Friends Experiential Faith.”

Expectant Worship, Vocal Ministry

Meeting for worship is the heart of the Religious Society of Friends. In meeting for worship individuals gather in prayer and silence, waiting expectantly on the Spirit. In worship we seek a union of the hearts of all present as we search for Truth. As individuals we may enter into worship with concerns about family
and friends, members of our meeting community, and our local and world communities. We may also reflect on the ways we are in harmony with others and with Quaker testimonies.

When we are open to the Spirit in ourselves and in others, we may become united in our concern for each other and for our community. As this sense of unity in the Spirit grows, the meeting is gathered—there is a sense of strength and power in the presence of the Light that transcends us as individuals. Worshipping together we strengthen one another, and our bodies and minds are refreshed in the life of the Spirit.

Vocal ministry arises out of this silent worship. Vocal ministry is more than a mere urge to share a personal observation. It is a spontaneous outpouring that occurs when an individual experiences inward and outward signs prompting the sharing of a message from the Source. Some Friends report that before giving vocal ministry they experience sensations such as a rapid heartbeat, persistence of a thought or feeling, or a nudging of the Spirit.

In vocal ministry Friends strive to be clear and direct, and to speak as briefly as is needed to convey the message. Out of our own experience with the Divine, Friends share insights with fellow worshippers or offer praise or prayer or song.

After a message has been given, Friends take time to ponder its meaning before another rises to speak. We listen to ministry with respect and an open heart, seeking to appreciate both the meaning of the message and the spirit in which it is given.

*Children in Meeting for Worship.* Our children learn the ways of seeking Truth through expectant worship and vocal ministry. By participating in First-Day School and in the adult meeting for worship as they are able, children gradually become familiar with how to open themselves to the Spirit. Meetings seek ways of engaging children from newborns to young adults. Some meetings hold intergenerational meetings for worship where adults worship with children in the children’s space. Others hold “all-together” meetings longer than the usual brief periods when children are in meeting for worship.


**Quotations**

*God is spirit, and those who worship [God] must worship in spirit and truth.*

*John 4:24*

…That as any are moved of the Lord to speak the word of the Lord at … meetings, that it be done in faithfulness, without adding or diminishing.

*Epistle from the Elders at Balby, 1656*

[A]s many candles lighted and put in one place do greatly augment the light and make it more to shine forth, so when many are gathered together into the same life, there more of the glory of God and his powers appears, to the refreshment of each individual.

*Robert Barclay, 1671*

When you come to your meetings … what do you do? Do you then gather together bodily only, and kindle a fire, compassing yourselves about with the sparks of your own kindling, and so please yourselves, and walk in the “Light of your own fire, and in the sparks which you have kindled?” … Or rather, do you sit down in the True Silence, resting from your own Will and Workings, and waiting upon the Lord, with your minds fixed in that Light wherewith Christ has enlightened you, until the Lord breathes life into you, refresheth you, and prepares you, and your spirits and souls, to make you fit for his service, that you may offer unto him a pure and spiritual sacrifice?

*William Penn, 1678*

One day, being under a strong exercise of spirit, I stood up and said some words in a meeting; but not keeping close to the Divine opening, I said more than was required of me. Being soon sensible of my error, I was afflicted in mind some weeks without any light or comfort, even to that degree that I could not take satisfaction in anything. I remembered God, and was troubled, and in the depths of my distress he had pity on me, and sent the Comforter. I then felt forgiveness for my offense; my mind became calm and quiet, and I was truly thankful to my gracious Redeemer for his mercies. About six weeks after this, feeling the spring of Divine love opened, and a concern to speak, I said a few words in a meeting, in which I found peace. Being thus humbled and disciplined under the cross, my understanding became more strengthened to distinguish the pure spirit which inwardly moves upon the heart, and which taught me to wait in silence sometimes many weeks together, until I felt that
rise which prepares the creature to stand like a trumpet, through which the Lord speaks to his flock.

John Woolman, 1740

It is indeed true, as Friends have been accustomed to say, that we cannot expect “to eat the bread of idleness” in our silent meetings. Every individual spirit must work out its salvation in a living exercise of heart and mind, an exercise in which “fear and trembling” must often be our portion, and which cannot possibly be fully carried out under disturbing influences from without. Silence is often a stern discipline, a laying bare of the soul before God, a listening to the “reproof of life.” But the discipline has to be gone through, the reproof has to be listened to, before we can find our right place in the temple. Words may help and silence may help, but the one thing needful is that the heart should turn to its Maker as the needle turns to the pole. For this we must be still.

Caroline Stephen, 1908

Each Friend who feels called upon to rise and deliver a lengthy discourse might question himself — and herself — most searchingly, as to whether the message could not be more lastingly given in the fewest possible words, or even through his or her personality alone, in entire and trustful silence. ‘Cream must always rise to the surface.’ True. But other substances rise to the surface besides cream; substances that may have to be skimmed off and thrown away before bodies and souls can be duly nourished. ‘Is my message cream or scum?’ may be an unusual and is certainly a very homely query. Still it is one that every speaker, in a crowded gathering especially, should honestly face. Some of the dangers of silent worship can best be guarded against by its courtesies.

Violet Holdsworth, 1919

The first thing that I do is to close my eyes and then to still my body in order to get it as far out of the way as I can. Then I still my mind and let it open to God in silent prayer; for the meeting, as we understand it, is the meeting place of the worshiper with God. I thank God inwardly for this occasion, for the week’s happenings, for what I have learned at his hand, for my family, for the work there is to do, for himself. And I often pause to enjoy him. Under his gaze I search the week, and feel the piercing twinge of remorse that comes at this, and this, and this, and at the absence of this, and this, and this. Under his eyes I see again — for I have often been aware of it at the time — the right way. I ask his forgiveness of my faithlessness and ask for strength to meet this matter
when it arises again. There have been times when I had to reweave a part of my life under this auspice.

I hold up persons before God in intercession, loving them under his eyes – seeing them with him, longing for his healing and redeeming power to course through their lives. I hold up certain social situations, certain projects. At such a time I often see things that I may do in company with or that are related to this person or this situation. I hold up the persons in the meeting and their needs, as I know them, to God.

Douglas Steere, 1937

I come to Meeting for Worship to attend to that Presence which is always present but before which I am not always alert and listening.

I come to be disarmed by truth, a process in which I am helped to discern what I have hidden from myself in overlays of activity. …

I come to the ministry of silence and caring to experience whatever needs to happen not only for me but for each person heart-led there.

I come not knowing what will be asked of me or given, trusting that process and that Power which directs.

Shirley Ruth Parks Tweed, 1982

One morning, as we waited on God in silence, it struck me in a fresh way how Friends’ practice of open worship can, in a sense, be an amazing balance of utter discipline and total freedom. In open worship, we deliberately choose to trust the Holy Spirit in practice as well as theory; we deliberately confront any temptation we might feel to intervene and shape the worship time correctly, or fill the awkward emptiness by reaching into our storehouse of Christian clichés, or gratify our own egos. We enter into a taste of the freedom we’re promised as the daughters and sons of God.

Johan Maurer, 2013

Clearly, vocal ministry that we might dismiss as “popcorn” might actually be lifesaving to someone else — even if we never know about it. Thus, we are challenged by our faith to grant respect to ideas that we are tempted to label as meaningless or negative. Different individuals connect very differently with all that is holy. It may be through song, through awareness of the Earth’s majesty, through the sharp taste of injustice, or through unexpected moments of compassion. Our Quaker practice of listening requires us to go deeper and learn how we might engage with the Life that dwells in places we would avoid.

Margery Post Abbott, 2014
**Advices & Queries – Expectant Worship, Vocal Ministry**

We prepare ourselves for meeting for worship in many ways – for example, through regular study, meditation and prayer – so that we come into meeting with open, expectant spirits seeking after Truth.

Search within yourself before rising to give vocal ministry – be aware of the physical and spiritual promptings that underlie true vocal ministry.

If prompted by the Spirit to give vocal ministry, we speak audibly, clearly, simply, and as briefly as possible.

Listen to the ministry of others as if it is the voice of the Divine; seek the thoughts behind the words and hold the speaker in love.

After a message is given, Friends take time to ponder its meaning and to give space before rising to speak if we are so led.

Prepare the children of meeting to understand and experience the power of Quaker worship and vocal ministry.

- How do we prepare our hearts and minds for meeting for worship?
- Do we worship together in a way that honors and respects other Friends’ beliefs? How do we listen to ministry that seems wrong or misguided?
- Do we meet for worship in expectant waiting for the promptings of the Divine Spirit? How do we carry this inspiration into our daily living?
- How do we take care that our vocal ministry is not lightly given? Do we offer vocal ministry under the leading of the Spirit, in the simplicity and sincerity of truth?
- As we listen, or as we speak, are we guided by the inward Light and sensitive to one another’s needs? Are we careful not to speak at undue length or beyond our call?
Silence

The silence we value is a deep stillness of heart and mind. Friends dwell in silence on many occasions. We provide for silence at weddings and memorials and at meetings for the transaction of business. Committee meetings open with silence, and silent grace quiets the heart before meals. These shared silences foster unity and charity among us.

Daily retirement for a period of quiet can give an individual a sense of peace and self-control. Another form of silence, described by Friends as an “opportunity,” bears a resemblance to a brief meeting for worship. It arises either by prearrangement or spontaneously, and may occur during visits to the homes of Friends or in unusual circumstances, such as on a park bench or in a hospital waiting room.

Similarly, a pause may occur during general conversation, when we are drawn into stillness until words emerge again from a place of deep refreshment. Active silence gathers us to walk in nature, or to perform quiet tasks together such as needlework, devotional reading, leaf-raking, or washing dishes. We are enriched by those among us whose lives embody and dwell in silence.

Silent retreats are times set aside for the refreshment of the spirit. Some Friends set aside an occasional weekend for an individual retreat in silence and solitude, for example when carrying weighty responsibilities. They may spend the time in prayer and reflection, visiting a garden or nature preserve, or yielding to the call to rest in quiet. Regular times for silence and retreat seem essential for spiritual growth.

Organized silent retreats call Friends together for a period of time. The retreat provides an occasion for silence, worship, and prayer away from the atmosphere in which committees and business are usually conducted. The Friends come with the expectation that in waiting together we may be gathered in worship in a way different from private meditation or a quiet weekend in the country. This more sustained period of retirement shared with other Friends can deepen our individual spiritual lives and the life we share together.
Quotations

Now there was a great wind, so strong that it was splitting mountains and breaking rocks in pieces before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the wind; and after the wind an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake; and after the earthquake a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire; and after the fire a sound of sheer silence.

1 Kings 19:11b-12

Be still, and know that I am God!

Psalm 46:10

Be still in thy own mind and spirit from thy own thoughts, and then thou wilt feel the principle of God to turn thy mind to the Lord God, whereby thou wilt receive his strength and power from whence life comes, to allay all tempests, against blusterings and storms. That is it which molds into patience, into innocency, into soberness, into stillness, into stayedness, into quietness, up to God, with his power.

George Fox, 1658

Remember [that] it is a still voice that speaks to us in this day, and that it is not to be heard in the noises and hurries of the mind.

William Penn, 1691

We were taught by renewed experience to labor for an inward stillness, at no time to seek for words, but to live in the spirit of Truth, and utter that to the people which Truth opened in us.

John Woolman, 1747

Silence is the inaudible echo of the voices of God which is heard with the ears of the heart. It is not simply the absence of speech but a state of being. It is a universal language that speaks and comprehends all, contains all languages and all accents, tolerates and absorbs all. The paradox of the silence is that one can never say enough about it since it is inexhaustible by its very nature. … Silence enables us to escape the prison of words. … You may step into the pool of silence denuded and in pain but you will emerge from it restored in truth and peace.

Peter and Carole Fingesten, 1987

Might part of the vocation of the Society of Friends be to keep silence alive as a service for the world?

Kathryn Damiano, 2000
We need a vocabulary to describe the different textures of our corporate silence so we can better appreciate the experience. When we focus on the vocal ministry to evaluate the quality of our corporate worship we have looked to the fruits and missed the source. Attending to the quality of the corporate silence can disentangle the personal issues that arise in reacting to the vocal ministry of another. Sometimes our experience in the silence might be fragmented, distracted, or scattered, with our thoughts and focus jumping from one thing to another. Other times it might be a deep stillness where many of those present feel held to attention, perhaps like what happens in a yoga asana where the breath moves through us while the mind is quiet. Practice can help us come to that place of deep, focused attentiveness more readily.

Debbie Humphries, 2009

The discipline of silence and openness must be practiced over and over, day after day, week after week, alone and with others. The Light nurtures a Seed in us but to grow, that Seed must be repeatedly exposed to the Light.

Robert Griswold, 2010

Advices & Queries – Silence

All of us need to find a way into silence which allows us to deepen our awareness of the Divine and to find the inward source of our strength.

Amid the busyness of daily living, we seek to return to the stillness which grounds us.

We value silence, not as an end but as a means toward the end, which is communication with the Divine and fellowship with one another.

We must not remain silent when something is wrong, or when we are led to speak out.

Seek to be formed by a practice of silence, as a foundation for a mindful life.

• Do we set aside times of quiet for openness to the Spirit?
• How do we bring stillness into our daily lives?
• Do we seek to be formed by a living silence? How are our lives shaped by the practice of stillness?
• Do our hearts dwell in the silence beneath everyday busyness?

**Prayer**

Prayer is spending intentional time in the presence of the Divine. Regular times of corporate and personal prayer build our relationship with the Living Christ. This enables deeper communion for us as individuals through each day and for the meeting when we gather in worship.

Prayer can take many forms, such as thanksgiving, praise, self-reflection, and asking God’s support for others, which many contemporary Friends call “holding in the Light.” If we ask for specific outcomes, the Divine Power may not answer as we wish. An alternative is to take the issue or the person(s) in our minds and hearts to the Light and leave them there.

Some practices that Friends have found effective are:

• Sinking into the Spirit and opening ourselves to the motion of Love;
• Reading and deep reflection upon diverse sources of spiritual wisdom;
• Harmonious meditation in response to the wonders of the natural world;
• Offering gratitude;
• Seeking spiritual and practical guidance;
• Recounting the day’s events along with the feelings, inklings, and openings contained within them.

Friends have found ways to focus their attention on the holy by devoting particular times of the day to prayer or through making reminders for themselves within a day. Many Quaker families pause for a quiet time of reminder and remembrance before each meal together. Others reflect and connect with Spirit whenever they encounter particular situations, such as passing through a doorway, stopping at a traffic signal, or waiting for a computer to
Prayer in the setting of meeting for worship may lead to a “gathered” meeting, where Friends unite in a deep contemplative connection with each other and the Divine.

**Quotations**

...Not my will but yours be done.

*Luke 22:42b*

Pray without ceasing; give thanks in all circumstances....

*1 Thessalonians 5:17-18a*

I remember one morning it came into my mind that I would write a prayer of my own composing …; which I did, though I could then scarcely join my letters, I had learnt so little a time to write. The prayer I wrote was something after this manner: “Lord, thou commandest the Israelites to offer a morning sacrifice, so I offer up the sacrifice of prayer, and desire to be preserved this day.” The use of this prayer for a little while gave me some ease. I soon quite left my prayer books, and used to write prayers according to my several occasions. The second that I wrote was for the assurance of the pardon of my sins.

*Mary Penington (1616–1682)*

One of these deep constructive energies of life is prayer. It is a way of life that is as old as the human race is, and it is as difficult to “explain” as is our joy over love and beauty. It came into power in man’s early life and it has persisted through all the stages of it because it has proved to be essential to spiritual health and growth and life-advance. Like all other great springs of life, it has sometimes been turned to cheap ends and brought down to low levels, but on the whole it has been a pretty steady uplifting power in the long story of human progress. The only way we could completely understand it would be to understand the eternal nature of God and man. Then we should no doubt comprehend why he and we seek one another and why we are unsatisfied until we mutually find one another.

*Rufus Jones, 1931*

But to establish the practice of the presence of God so that it becomes as natural as breathing – that requires a rigorous apprenticeship. When I think about it now it sounds silly, but I resorted to some trivial and seemingly ridiculous ways of keeping myself reminded. For instance, I fastened a large safety pin to the
front of my dress and I carried a button in my pocket that I felt every time I reached in to find a pencil or a handkerchief.

Josephine Duveneck, 1978

I read that I was supposed to make ‘a place for inward retirement and waiting upon God’ in my daily life, as the Queries in those days expressed it. At last I began to realise, first that I needed some kind of inner peace or inward retirement, or whatever name it might be called by; and then that these apparently stuffy old Friends were really talking sense. If I studied what they were trying to tell me, I might possibly find that the ‘place of inward retirement’ was not a place I had to go to, it was there all the time. I could know the ‘place of inward retirement’ wherever I was, or whatever I was doing, and find the spiritual refreshment for which, knowingly or unknowingly, I was longing, and hear the voice of God in my heart. Thus I began to realise that prayer was not a formality, or an obligation, it was a place which was there all the time and always available.

Elfrida Vipont Foulds, 1983

Has your heart ever come so close to bursting from joy – at the birth of the child or the beauty of a sunset, perhaps – that your whole being expanded with thankfulness? If so, your body was speaking a prayer of adoration, even if you uttered not a word. Have you ever been so passionately concerned for the welfare of one or more others – a deeply depressed loved one or refugees rejected by our government, perhaps – that you could hardly eat or sleep? If so, you were praying without ceasing.

Carol Conti-Entin, 1989

There is a healing that comes through prayer in its various forms, through the laying on of hands, through music and dance, painting and colour, through communication with and understanding of the world of nature and through friendship.

Jim Pym, 1990

We often come to prayer as a last resort. Why? Our Quaker heritage is rich with examples of positive response to burdens and concerns through prayer. In our tradition, the Spirit is always invited to participate in seeking solutions and finding inner and outer peace. The need for healing is universal; faith and the practice of prayer, in the manner of Friends, is a gift. We need to unwrap it and use it generously.

Susan Carnahan, 1996
Contrary to a lot of opinion, there is no “best” way to pray. The best way to pray is as the Spirit is prompting or leading you at the time. Or, as Dom John Chapman is rumored to have said, “Pray as you can, not as you can’t.” It’s probably best to make time in your daily time of retirement to enter intentionally into whichever form of prayer is yours at the present – as well as to be sensitive and open to the moments of prayer that come upon you unexpectedly in the course of your days.

Patricia Loring, 1997

Count the stars in the sky; that is how many ways there are to pray.

Mary Jo Williams, 2007

We can bring ourselves again and again to the Light that reveals, confronts, and heals all that obscures the truth within us, and we can do this with a steady commitment that refuses to allow prayer to become merely a comforting retreat. The key is honesty, not piety, and a willingness not to get hung up on problems of belief. I asked the class to suspend disbelief, to take the love of God as a working hypothesis, and then to submit to prayer’s alchemy. Given that so much of what passes for prayer is merely the rehearsal of an ideology, it is not surprising that so many intelligent people reject it. But Quakerism insists that belief finds its ground and substance in direct experience. To come to that experience one must bring one’s whole being, mind, heart, and body to an attitude of anticipation, intense listening, fierce engagement, and an insistent desire to be re-formed in the Creative Presence.

Daniel Snyder, 2008

**Advices & Queries – Prayer**

In prayer, Friends find humility and courage, guidance and strength for our daily lives.

Prayer requires attention.

Any form of prayer can open our hearts to God. Frequent and regular prayer leads us to become faithful in our lives.

- Do we set aside times of quiet for openness to the Spirit? How do we come to know an inward stillness amid the activities of daily life?
- Do we encourage in ourselves and in others a habit of returning to the Source throughout each day?
• Are we open to new Light, from whatever source it may come?
• How do we give communal attention to prayer, giving voice to joys and needs that Friends feel?
• How does our personal prayer life enrich meeting for worship?

**Discernment**

*A community that emphasizes the present availability of divine guidance must take discernment seriously. Discernment is sorting, careful listening and recognizing. Discernment offers tools to distinguish between an interior leading from God and an impulse whose origin is less worthy….*

*Michael Birkel, 2004*

Friends make decisions in the faith that there is one divine Spirit which is accessible to everyone and that when we follow the Light of Truth within, we find unity and right action. When we are faithful in discernment we become more patient, listen more carefully, feel stronger bonds of community, and are more sensitive to divine nudges. We find ourselves transformed and aligned with the Spirit.

Quaker discernment is a spiritual discipline that we practice in meeting for business, in committee work, in specially-constituted clearness and support committees, and in personal choices made every day.

**Meeting for Business and Other Community Decision Making.** Conducting business on the basis of discernment is central to the existence of a Friends meeting. Friends therefore sometimes speak of “meeting for worship for business” instead of “meeting for business.” The Quaker way of living and working together can create and preserve a sense of fellowship in the meeting. It is the way the community comes together to do its right work under the guidance of the Light.

Whether in smaller groups or in the full meeting for business, discernment works best when Friends are fully attending to the
Presence. The commitment to searching for unity depends upon mutual trust, implies a willingness to labor and to submit to the leadings of the Spirit, and increases as members grow in Love.

Quakers with a decision to make will not take a vote but will enter into worshipful discussion. All voices are heard and valued as the group seeks to recognize and follow God’s direction. Observers may describe Quaker decision making as working by consensus instead of majority rule. Consensus, a concept from the secular world, is a good way to find a decision that is generally acceptable to most people involved, but it is not what Quaker meetings for business are really reaching for. The question is not “What do we want to do?” but rather “What do Truth and Love require of us?” When gathered for discernment, the meeting strives to understand the divine will for this group of Friends at this time, as manifested by the sense of the meeting. Friends know the sense of the meeting by the collective internal harmony it brings, and acknowledge it in grateful worship. Sometimes discernment includes not making a decision because the group cannot find unity. Teaching the discipline of discernment to children and newcomers in the meeting can be particularly challenging and rewarding.

**Other Occasions for Community Discernment.** Regular committee work and other service to the meeting offer many opportunities to practice discernment and decision making, as do support groups and study groups. As in a meeting for business, all such occasions begin and end in silent worship.

**Clearness Committees.** From early times, Friends have appointed small groups to work with potential new members or with couples requesting marriage under the care of the meeting to test whether the way is “clear” – meaning that there are no impediments or unresolved issues – before the matter comes before the meeting for business. Gradually these clearness committees came to operate as pastoral counseling before approval of marriage or membership. (See Chapters 9 and 10, “Membership” and “Marriage and Committed Relationships.”) This existing structure has expanded and Friends now use clearness committees for other purposes, for example in making a life-changing decision
or in testing a leading. Seeking clearness in this way is a spiritual
discipline both for the Friend making the decision or testing the
leading and for those serving on the committee. Committee
members listen deeply and ask open-ended questions to help the
seeker focus and turn to the Inner Guide for direction, without
offering their own advice or solutions.

**Other Individual Discernment.** Spirit-led discernment is
an ongoing discipline which Friends practice individually in
many aspects of our lives, whether in service to the meeting or
in our homes, workplaces, and communities. Quiet, centered
discernment helps us to distinguish the right course among the
many distractions, temptations, mixed messages, and conflicting
choices of daily life.

See also “Friends Method of Reaching Decisions” and “Clearness
and Other Care Committees” in Chapter 5, “The Monthly Meeting.”

**Quotations**

*If you indeed cry out for insight,*
  *and raise your voice for understanding:*

*If you seek it like silver,*
  *and search for it as for hidden treasures —*

*Then you will understand the fear of the Lord*
  *and find the knowledge of God.*

*For the Lord gives wisdom;*
  *from his mouth come knowledge and understanding.*

*…*

*Then you will understand righteousness and justice*
  *and equity, every good path;*

*For wisdom will come into your heart,*
  *and knowledge will be pleasant to your soul;*

*Prudence will watch over you,*
  *and understanding will guard you.*

*Proverbs 2:3-6; 9-11*

*Being orderly come together, not to spend time with needless, unnecessary*
  *and fruitless discourses; but to proceed in the wisdom of God not in the way*
  *of the world, as a worldly assembly of men, by hot contests, by seeking to*
  *outpeak and overreach one another in discourse as if it were controversy*
between party and party of men, or two sides violently striving for dominion, not fellowship of God, in gravity, patience, meekness, in unity and concord, submitting one to another in lowliness of heart, and in the holy Spirit of truth and righteousness.

Edward Burrough, 1662

The spirit of worship is essential to that type of business meeting in which the group endeavors to act as a unit. To discover what we really want as compared with what at first we think we want, we must go below the surface of self-centered desires. To will what God wills is ... to will what we ourselves really want.

Howard Brinton, 1952

[I]t is the corporate Truth or Light for which Friends labor together, not the proof or justification of the rightness of any particular position.

Nancy Springer, 1980

Our task is not to find a decision of which we all approve, but the decision which is in unity with the Holy Spirit. We have arrived at the correct decision not when there is consensus or effective unanimity, but when the Spirit within us witnesses that the decision is correct.

Lloyd Lee Wilson, 1993

In seeking sense of the meeting, we open ourselves to being guided to a perfect resolution in Light, to a place where we sit in unity in the collective inward Presence. Through consensus we decide it; through sense of the meeting we turn it over, allowing it to be decided. “Reaching consensus is a secular process,” says a Friend. “In sense of the meeting God gets a voice.”

Barry Morley, 1993

I can count on one hand the number of times in my life when I have experienced what I would consider to be a true leading of the Spirit. In each case, the leadings have been characterized by a compulsion to act, fears that I would not be able to live up to what was being required of me, and a deeper sense that I wasn’t being asked to do this entirely on my own strength. In any case, I knew that a decision not to act upon my conscience would be like a small death, a failure to allow myself to grow and discover in myself new strengths and courage.

Ruth Walmsley, 1997
In a “listening spirituality”… our individual and corporate ability to discern, distinguish, or sift Divine Guidance from other promptings is critical. Rather than drawing a dualistic, yes/no distinction between good and evil, Quaker spirituality demands of us a commitment to a much more subtle and strenuous effort to discriminate movements of the Spirit among the complex motivations, forces and dimensions of experience within and around us.

*Patricia Loring, 1999*

Through the practice of unity, Friends seek a mystical experience in the last place most people would look for one – a business meeting.

*Mary Klein, 2008*

Perhaps the most outstanding aspect of Meeting for Business is its atmosphere, which one word describes, respect. Quakers respect one another. They are also open to each other and are unusually humble. Being non-violent they do not shout each other down or indulge in sarcastic remarks. In part, their respect for each other arises because of their common belief that everyone has the Light within. In part it comes because Quakers are wary of claiming truth for themselves, although they are willing to acknowledge their small piece of it. Moreover, they enter Meeting for Business with the belief that all are seeking the best solution to whatever problems confront them and that the group can arrive at a best solution through worshipping and working together.

*Patricia Williams, 2008*

**Advices & Queries – Discernment**

Seeking and waiting for Truth’s leadings is a discipline through which all can grow in patience, unity, and love. Decisions under the guidance of the Spirit knit the loving community together.

We remain patient and wait upon God as long as needed for a decision to emerge which clearly recommends itself as the right one.

We guard against contentiousness, obstinacy, and love of control and power. We remember that our views, however fondly cherished, may be wrong.

We season our decisions and test our leadings with patience and integrity. We take care to stay within our leadings, lest we outrun our Guide.
Friends approach meeting for business, committee meetings, and other occasions for group discernment with trust that the Holy Spirit will lead us to unity and right action. Unity is always possible because the same Light of Truth shines in some measure in every human heart. Communal discernment takes place in a context of worship as those present seek divine guidance.

Friends expect unity as the outcome, not as the starting point, of communal discernment. We proceed in the peaceable spirit of the light of Truth, with forbearance and warm affection for one another. Light will be shed on matters from many angles. We trust that as Truth is spoken, its power cannot be resisted.

We express our views but refrain from pressing them unduly. It is less important for any individual to be heard than it is for Truth to be given voice.

Group discernment and the search for unity may require us to accept with good grace a decision of the meeting we do not entirely agree with.

Contributing to the meeting’s discernment is a responsibility of membership. This includes attending meetings for business and being faithful in the service of the meeting’s affairs.

- Do we patiently seek divine guidance to discern the right course of action?
- How do we test our leadings? Do we patiently and prayerfully seek clearness in the Light? Do we offer spiritual aid for others who are seeking clearness?
- When our own way is unclear, do we seek the counsel of others in our meeting?
- What can we do to help others recognize, temper, and strengthen their leadings?
- Do we hold our meetings for business in the spirit of worship, love, and understanding? How are we seeking God’s Truth together in community?
- Do we regularly take part in meetings for business? Do we uphold the meeting in prayer when we cannot be present?
• Do we come into meeting for business prepared to be changed? Are we ready to let go of our individual thoughts and wishes and let the Holy Spirit lead the meeting to unity?
• As difficult problems arise, are we careful to meet them in a spirit of love and humility, with minds open for creative solutions? How do we avoid taking sides and forming factions?
• Do we avoid the pressure of time, neither unnecessarily prolonging nor unduly curtailing full consideration?
• Are we aware that we speak through inaction as well as action?

Ministry

Ministry is a motion of Love and a response to both internal and external needs. We are all called to ministry, and there are many occasions when we can minister to one another in the Life and Light.

Ministry takes many forms. One of the most visible is vocal ministry in our meetings for worship. (See “Expectant Worship, Vocal Ministry” above.) Our participation in the life of our meeting may provide us other opportunities to minister. (See “Participation in the Life of the Meeting” below.) We may be called to minister through our work with wider Quaker organizations.

Ministry arises through recognizing gifts in others. This may occur informally in our daily conversations with each other. The gifts may also be recognized through the discernment of our meeting, perhaps by the nominating committee. As ministers we are humble and open enough to embrace opportunities for service – that is, we “keep low,” in the old Quaker phrase.

There are also ministries of caring, support, and counsel that quietly and persistently work among us. These seek to meet the physical, social, and spiritual needs we all have and lead to deepening our mutual life in the Spirit. Inviting someone to lunch after meeting, making a friendly phone call, regularly visiting a
Friend descending into dementia, opening our home to someone recovering from surgery, arriving before meeting for worship to open the meeting house and turn on the heat in preparation for worship: all are occasions of ministry.

We may be called by love to any number of duties. When a duty is performed through love, it is a ministry.

There is also ministry through the books, pamphlets, and periodicals that Friends publish; these publications can travel to places few might be able to visit. More than one person has come into our Society through the printed word. Likewise the websites and blogs we create, however singular they appear, are forms of ministry to the world and to each other.

Lastly, there is a continuing ministry in our deportment in daily life, how we live out our testimonies in the world. Each one of us is a witness to Truth, found in Love, which is the fundamental ministry.

See also “Friends in Ministry” in Chapter 5, “The Monthly Meeting.”

**Quotations**

*True ministry is not goal-oriented. True ministry is a state of servanthood, for that is the root meaning of the word to minister: “to serve”. Success or failure in ministry is judged by God, not by human beings, and the basis of God’s judgment is whether we have been faithful in the process of serving God and our fellow human beings, not on what the outcomes of that service have been.*

*Lloyd Lee Wilson, 1996*

*A concern for the ministry is a calling to be intentionally available to put our experience of the divine light and life at the disposal of others, for their refreshment and encouragement. If we accept the calling, then it is a commitment to redouble our inward watchfulness, so that we grow in faithfulness, and grow in our ability to serve. As we gain more of this inward experience, we find an increase in the clarity with which we are able to desire, pray for, serve, and rejoice at, the growth of the love to God and neighbor as it appears in anyone. This in turn feeds the life of the group, and invites others to come and see.*

*Brian Drayton, 2006*
Again and again we [are] given the message that things will go wrong, someone will be an obstacle, others won’t do as we hoped, we will at times fail. Yet in living our ministry, whatever it might be, we are given strength and we are asked to persist and find a way. If the support we need is not obvious, we might have to help others find the gift of nurture. If someone objects to our actions, we might need to listen them into a place where both might hear a way forward. Our own pains and trauma are part of who we are. In the Light we may learn ways that these pains might be an aid rather than an obstacle to our work and our relationships. Generosity and patience are essential.

Margery Post Abbott, 2009

For Quakers, “ministry” is almost synonymous with “service,” but with the added sense that ministry is service that is done under God’s guidance.

Mathilda Navias, 2012

**Advices & Queries – Ministry**

Friends seek to discover the gifts and discern the service to which we are called. In making life choices, we consider ways that offer the fullest opportunity to develop our individual abilities and contribute to the wider community while providing for ourselves and our families.

In daily work, we seek to manifest a spirit of justice and understanding, thus giving a living witness to the Truth.

Friends recognize that we are given gifts for the use of the meeting and the world. The meeting seeks to recognize and nurture the use of those gifts.

Remember that our simple presence can be a ministry – at a bedside or at a protest.

- Are we careful to wait for and move under the leading of the Spirit in the exercise of our gifts?
- How do we minister to each other, offering and receiving advice and support in a spirit of love and humility?
- Do we hold with tenderness each of the varieties of ministry exercised among us?
• When our ministry involves social and political action, how does it stay grounded in Truth and Love?
• How does our meeting nurture and support calls to service?

Participation in the Life of the Meeting

Our Religious Society of Friends is enriched when all members and attenders take part to the greatest measure of their gifts. The working of the Spirit in our lives as Friends in community can be seen in many ways: through prophetic ministry, witness in the world, loving care for each other, conscientious attention to committee work, and the examples provided by lives lived in the Light. Quaker organizations and service groups offer opportunities for participation in the Religious Society of Friends as a whole.

The life of the meeting depends upon the varied gifts and leadings of all members and attenders. Awareness of the Presence in our lives connects us to each other, and over time we are known by the people with whom we gather. As we worship, work, and socialize together, we form friendships that strengthen our communities locally and in the wider Quaker world. A meeting grows as it includes new Friends and attenders of many ethnicities, social classes, backgrounds, political beliefs, and theologies. We offer informal advice and counsel to one another, thus gaining skills and experience that enrich our lives outside the Religious Society of Friends.

In addition, the health of the meeting depends upon practical contributions from everyone. Within meetings, the Nominating and Finance Committees point out needs and suggest ways for individuals to participate and contribute. Individual Friends discern what financial contributions we can make and what other support we are led to offer. Financial support is a vital component in the life of the monthly, quarterly, and yearly meetings.

Quotations

For as in one body we have many members, and not all members have the same function, so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually we are
members one of another. We have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us: prophecy, in proportion to faith; ministry, in ministering; the teacher, in teaching; the exhorter, in exhortation; the giver, in generosity; the leader, in diligence; the compassionate, in cheerfulness.

Romans 12:4-8

Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of working, but it is the same God who inspires them all in every one. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. To one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the discernment of spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues.

1 Corinthians 12:4-10

Not by strength of arguments or by a particular disquisition of each doctrine and convincement of my understanding thereby, came I to receive and bear witness of the Truth, but by being secretly reached by the Life. For when I came into the silent assemblies of God’s people, I felt a secret power among them which touched my heart; and as I gave way unto it I found the evil weakening in me and the good raised up and so I became thus knit and united unto them, hungering more and more after the increase of this power and life, whereby I might feel myself perfectly redeemed.

Robert Barclay, 1676

The way to call anyone into fellowship with us is not to offer them service, which is likely to arouse the resistance of their pride, but to ask service of them.

Simeon Shitemi, 1991

When I was sixteen and first came to Quakers, I felt so much that I kept coming back. And I began to understand that Quakerism is cumulative. The more you enter into the silence and the stillness, the more that you ask to be washed in the Light, the more that you participate, the more you begin to understand that there is ground opening up beneath you that is larger and deeper than you first imagined.

John Calvi, 2009
Advices & Queries – Participation in the Life of the Meeting

When meeting for worship holds a central place in our life, regular and punctual attendance follows. Friends hold in the Light those who are unable to participate fully in the life of the meeting.

We contribute to the life of the meeting in many ways: attending meeting for business, committee service, offering and accepting spiritual support, and praying for the spiritual strength and health of the meeting. Contributing our time and resources makes our love visible.

Friends are encouraged to consider what gifts of service we are led to provide and how we may grow through this service. We also uphold others in their service.

We consider carefully the needs of our local meetings and wider Quaker work and the level of financial support we can bring to them.

We encourage attenders to become acquainted with Friends ways and to participate in the meeting community. We encourage attenders to apply for membership when it is evident that the meeting has become their spiritual home.

• Do we each take an active part in the life of our meeting? In what ways do we grow by participating in the life of the meeting?
• How has our group grown together through its activities? Do we bring together groups across generations in a loving community?
• Do we provide youth with responsible opportunities and encouragement to participate in meeting life and structure?
• Do we express our skills and gifts in service to the meeting and to the Spirit? Do we recognize and support others in doing so?
• Do we visit one another in our homes, and keep in touch with distant members?
• How do we welcome and involve newcomers?
• How do we encourage attenders from all ethnicities, backgrounds, and faith perspectives to share in the life of the meeting? Do we urge them to consider membership when they are ready?

• How does God speak to each of us through relationship to the meeting?

Religious Education and Study

The primary way of imparting our Quaker testimonies – the fruits of the Spirit – is by living and acting faithfully in our homes, meetings, and communities. Friends have long recognized that education, particularly education that promotes spiritual growth, enhances the inward transforming experience. This brings us into closer harmony with the Spirit and enables us to live faithfully as Quakers. Friends hold that everyone has access to the Inner Light, and that all can benefit from education. At the same time we recognize that education itself does not necessarily lead to a deeper spiritual sensitivity.

Monthly meetings have a responsibility to bring the children and adults under their care into full participation in the life of the meeting and into an understanding of the faith and practices of the Religious Society of Friends.

Children’s Religious Education. As individuals and families we show our children and each other that our search for Truth involves every aspect of life, and that the Truth may be found in many religions and spiritual traditions. Ideally, all members of meeting joyfully participate, as they are led, in the spiritual education and formation of the meeting’s young people. Many adolescent and young adult Friends find spiritual nurture in regional Quaker communities. These give young Friends a chance to learn Quaker practice and experience unconditional love.

Adult Religious Education. Meetings provide many ways for Friends to learn and grow spiritually throughout our lives. These include:
• Opportunities that help us live out our Quaker faith and practice, including the testimonies;
• Study and discussion of Quaker writings, the Bible, and other religious and spiritual literature;
• Service projects;
• Spiritual sharing groups;
• Worship-sharing;
• Programs offered by regional meetings and by other Friends organizations;
• Online resources (see Bibliography and www.npym.org for suggestions)

Quotations

[The Bible is a training school in discrimination among alternatives. One of the most sobering facts is that it is not on the whole a peaceful book – I mean a book of peace of mind. The Bible is the deposit of a long series of controversies between rival views of religion. The sobering thing is that in nearly every case the people shown by the Bible to be wrong had every reason to think they were in the right, and like us they did so. Complacent orthodoxy is the recurrent villain in the story from first to last and the hero is the challenger, like Job, the prophets, Jesus, and Paul.

Henry Cadbury, 1953

It makes me sad when I hear discussions about not introducing children to “God” until they’re old enough to understand. I grew into the Lord’s Prayer, and I am still growing into it. All religious language, all devotional books, particularly the Bible, provide growing room for young minds and spirits. Because they have sometimes been used as straitjackets by adults who did not understand, does not mean that they are straitjackets.

Elise Boulding, 1975

I feel peace education is about teaching children to discover that they have the power to change things they see are wrong and developing the imagination to find alternative responses to conflict. This is not an objective for a course called ‘Peace’ on the timetable. It must permeate all our teaching. For we cannot teach one thing and act another. If we teach children to feel their own power we must be ready for them to criticize the [educators themselves].
order to survive we must begin to teach them to challenge authority, our own included.

Janet Gilbraith, 1986

Our experience [is] that God speaks to and works through children as well as adults. Religious education needs to respect, affirm and value children's insights.

Janet Scott, 1988

To find guidance from the Bible, I first had to learn how to wrestle and argue with it. To take it seriously enough to wrestle with it, I also had to learn to honor it, listening attentively to what its ancient voices actually say in their own way. The faithful must argue for justice, as Abraham and Job did, even against God Himself. It's certainly no breach of the prophetic faith to argue with the Bible wherever it promotes what we see as injustice. Rather, anyone who fails to argue with the Bible on behalf of the covenant isn't taking the Bible seriously.

Jim Corbett, 1991

For guidance in word and deed, we look first to the Spirit as revealed in ourselves and in others. We recognize as did George Fox that education in itself does not necessarily lead to a deeper spiritual sensitivity and that there are many who lack extensive formal education yet who bring pure water from the spiritual springs of life. But we also know from experience that the perspective provided by sound education, which includes the development of skills in listening and communicating, helps us to identify what is faithful to the Light in our own leadings, to interpret and communicate those leadings, and to weigh the leadings of others.

Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, 2007

Evidently the Bible has no magical power to require the most life-giving interpretations or prevent its own misuse. Maybe this is one way to state the lesson for Christian leaders in drawing upon biblical authority: beware of any institutional agenda we bring to biblical interpretation. Let the Bible express and serve the promises of God, not the political priorities of humans.

Johan Maurer, 2012

I read the Bible the same way that I listen to messages in meeting for worship: I start with the assumption that the message was inspired by the Spirit, but
with the understanding that it may not be for me that day. So I read the Bible, listen for the voice of God, pay attention to what is for me at that time, and let go of anything that is not.

Ashley Wilcox, 2012

Advices & Queries – Religious Education and Study

Friends study and learn throughout our lives in order to understand and deepen our experience of Truth and our Inner Teacher.

As individuals and families we make manifest our search for Truth in every aspect of life, and recognize that Truth may be found in many religions and spiritual practices. Friends participate, as they are led, in the spiritual education and formation of the meeting’s young people.

As we learn together, we spiritually nurture each other according to our gifts and leadings, participate more fully in our meetings, and deepen our understanding of the beliefs and practices of the Religious Society of Friends.

• Do we help to develop the spiritual lives of all of our members, attenders, and children?
• Do we all take part in educating ourselves about the history and heritage of Friends?
• Do we prepare members and children for worship and for a way of life consistent with the Friends principles? How do we teach Quaker worship and discernment and their importance to the good order of our meeting community?
• Do we share our faith and spiritual journeys, as well as listen to and learn from others? Do we encourage such sharing within our families and meeting communities?

Creativity

The creative impulse is part of being human, a gift from the Holy Spirit, and a way of finding a deep connection with our Creator. Friends have long appreciated the strong creative element in
all aspects of practical life, such as cooking, gardening, and woodworking, and have from early days embraced invention and innovation in engineering, science, and business.

Early Quakers disapproved of attending plays, playing or listening to music, dancing, and other aspects of the fine arts. These activities were understood to alienate the mind from the counsel of divine wisdom and to foster debauchery and wickedness.

After this long era of suspicion, the door opened during the past century to Friends’ appreciation of the fine and performing arts as well. Nowadays we have among us cellists and watercolorists and novelists, to name a few of the arts practiced by Friends.

We acknowledge that the searching heart can express itself in many forms. Spirit-led creative activity is a path into the Light, not a distraction from or an obstruction to a centered life. Creativity can be a form of worship and witness, a ministry and a calling, a way of speaking out of the silence. Like other spiritual disciplines, creative expression carries the potential for spiritual transformation.

**Quotations**

Praise the Lord!

Sing to the Lord a new song, his praise in the assembly of the faithful.

... 

Let them praise his name with dancing,  
Making melody to him with tambourine and lyre.  

Psalm 149:1, 3

Let us beware of this, of separating or looking upon ourselves to be more holy, than in deed and in truth we are…. But Christ Jesus saith, that we must take no thought what we shall eat, or what we shall drink, or what we shall put on; but bids us consider the lilies how they grow in more royalty than Solomon. But contrary to this, they say we must look at no colours, nor make anything that is changeable colours as the hills are, nor sell them nor wear them. But we must be all in one dress, and one colour. This is a silly poor Gospel. It is more fit for us to be covered with God’s eternal spirit, and clothed with his eternal Light, which leads us and guides us into righteousness and to live righteously and justly and holy in this present evil world.

Margaret Fell, 1700
Art has survived all cataclysms; it is imperishable because it is of the Spirit and it renews itself in constant creative giving. Man creating order, form and meaning out of the raw material of thought, color and sound — the poet, the artist, the composer — wages his endless battle for perfection, for immortality, for truth and beauty. These fragile creations, wrought by mind, heart and hand, have left their mark on this earth. They will still be there long after the empires of kings and conquerors have gone to ruin and oblivion.

_Fritz Eichenberg, 1952_

I feel that the creation of poetry is not unlike the upsurging of words in a Quaker meeting. First, heart and mind must be prepared — and the emotional and mental preparation for art is something which few non-artists realize. Then there is the waiting, perhaps for months, because poetry cannot be forced: it is an act of imagination, not of will … and then at last comes the moment of certainty, accompanied usually by some physical action, and the words begin to flow.

_Clive Sansom, 1965_

Quakers have not been handicapped in their relation to art because they don’t have “religious” art in their Meeting Houses. Their custom may have been an enormous advantage: it has kept the general run of bad “religious” art out of the worship experience. I strongly favor the traditional simplicity of the Meeting House. By temperament each person needs to find his own spiritual relatives in the world of visual arts, and his needs change as he grows. Meetings can help their members come to recognize this need.

_Dorothea Blom, 1974_

The Holy Spirit can indeed restore us to health (or stimulate us to work well) through the medium of music as well as prayer or antibiotics! And why, indeed, should I be surprised that this is so? Creativity is the gift that we were given on the eighth day of creation. In naming and re-making the world we are co-workers with God, and whether we are making a garden or a meal, a painting or a piece of furniture or a computer program, we are sharing in an ongoing act of creation through which the world is constantly re-made.

_Jo Farrow, 1994_

In the way I view the world and my work, creation is a gift and a blessing. It comes from the Life-Giver, so our response as creators is to create something that is life-giving.

_Linda Segar, 1999_
We often think of creativity as the solitary expression of our inmost soul, but many of the creations which have made our Quaker community grow in the last few years have been shared enterprises which no one person could produce, and we have grown as we have made them together…. In order to create together, we gladly hand over our precious autonomy to the authority of the group, the authority of the event, the Clerk, the conductor, or skilled peacemaker, and we are prepared to be part of the group. We are learning together to use the disciplines and language of music and painting and theatre; this recreates our communities and simultaneously brings us more deeply into the ground of all this creativity, the silence and words of God.

Beth Allen, 2007

Creativity has become a spiritual practice, and my spiritual practice has become the creative process. These have become one. My work is about preparing the ground and then receiving and amplifying what comes. There is a transformation for us spiritually as we receive it.

Anna Fritz, 2016

**Advices & Queries – Creativity**

Friends exercise our creative gifts as spiritual disciplines that require time, focus, patience, trust, love, and openness to the Spirit. We are encouraged to develop and exercise them with awe and gratitude under the leading of that Spirit.

We acknowledge and cherish the creativity found in our meetings.

We remain aware of the spiritual danger of idolizing or belittling artistic gifts or accomplishments, whether our own or others’.

- Do we exercise our creativity in humility and gratitude to the Creator who makes our work possible? Do we recognize creation as a sacred act and creative ability as a gift from God?
- Do we use our creative gifts to bring beauty, healing, and joy into others’ lives and to reflect the glory of creation?
- Within our meeting communities, do we recognize and encourage each other in the exercise of creative gifts?
- In a culture that glorifies individual achievements, do we hold our own creations lightly?
Chapter 4

Friends Testimonies

From the beginning Friends believed that they could have direct and immediate communication with God which would enable them to discern right ethical choices. But they soon experienced certain common leadings of the Spirit which became formalized into testimonies. These testimonies served as common principles and standards of behavior and action which they believed the consistency of the Spirit’s leading required of them.

Wilmer Cooper, 1991

Testimonies are fruits of the Spirit marking directions for our lives. Historically, testimonies were matters about which unity had been reached and which sometimes resulted in codified behavior. On one level, testimonies can be seen as values or principles of morality. On a deeper level, what Friends call “testimonies” are the result of our being transformed from the worldly to the spiritual – our journey into Light. They are the direct consequence of an encounter with the Spirit and of our response to that encounter.

Learning a moral code will not in itself make us good. Stories, histories, and journals can help us understand how to act rightly in the world. When we are drawn to Inward Truth and have made it part of us – as opposed to merely understanding it – we are able to act in unity with the Spirit.

Friends traditionally describe personal transformation as a gradual development over a lifetime. Convincement is the beginning of
this process, the point at which we accept the Light and commit to following its guidance. As we are changed over time by acting in conformity with that guidance, we are increasingly drawn toward what Friends have traditionally called “perfection” – that is, living a life open to continuing revelation and aligned with divine Truth and Love.

As other Christians did, early Friends believed that they did not have the power, on their own, to make themselves over. For them, transformation could happen only through empowerment by the Light. Friends did, however, believe that people can choose to respond in ways that strengthen and increase their measure of the Light. Once Friends are convinced in this way, the means by which they open themselves to the Spirit are varied. Friends for centuries have been in unity about the outcome of that change, if not in the language they use to describe it.

There isn’t always a clear boundary between faithfully following a spiritual discipline (see Chapter 3) and living out a testimony. Nor are there clear boundaries between testimonies. Is truth-telling, for example, an aspect of simplicity in the sense that it leads away from deceptions that complicate our lives, or is it an aspect of integrity in that our yes should mean yes and our no mean no? Does social-justice activism arise from our concern for peace-making, or our concern for equality? In either instance, “both, and more” is the only honest answer. All the testimonies interconnect. How we talk and write about them is less important than whether or not they are actually alive in us.

Acknowledging that the lines between them are sometimes arbitrary, this chapter describes six testimonies that are widely accepted within NPYM: integrity, community, peace, simplicity, equality, and stewardship. These are words we use to help describe the indescribable results we discover in ourselves when we open to the Light. Regardless of the words used or the spiritual path followed, those who have begun to experience this transformation will recognize its signs in themselves and others.

Early Friends saw the purpose of religion as uniting humankind with the Divine. The nature of this unification is remarkably similar
across spiritual traditions. Lists exist in many traditions similar to the list of “fruits of the Spirit” found in Galatians 5:22-23: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Wherever we look in human spirituality we may find a similar description of salvation, enlightenment, maturation, or perfection. The outcome of a spiritual transformation, then, seems to be predictable. It has been reproduced throughout time all over the world.

Testimony of Integrity

Living with integrity presents the daily challenge of keeping our lives congruent with the Light – in essence, living in Truth. Our choices in how we use our time, spend our money, and form relationships are consistent with what we believe. Our conversation in public and private is a seamless whole. On those infrequent occasions when we are required to swear an oath, we can advance the cause of truth by simple affirmation. The greater discipline is to continually exercise care in speech, making statements that convey truth without exaggeration or omission of essential fact.

Conduct is integrity made visible. We cannot learn or think our way into faithfulness; requires that belief and action be aligned. We are called to perform our daily tasks with measured care so that our work is sound. We behave honestly with individuals and toward organizations. Willingness to bear the consequences of our convictions leads to taking our lives seriously. A capacity for self-examination enables us to work toward integrity. The words and witness of Friends provide encouragement towards a life lived whole.

The Light in our hearts leads us into ways we can meet the challenges of living a life of integrity.

Quotations

At the first convincement, when Friends could not put off their hats to people, or say You to a single person, but Thou and Thee; when they could not bow, or use flattering words in salutations, or adopt the fashions and customs of the
world, many Friends, that were tradesmen of several sorts, lost their customers at the first; for the people were shy of them, and would not trade with them; so that for a time some Friends could hardly get money enough to buy bread. But afterwards, when people came to have experience of Friends’ honesty and truthfulness, and found that their Yea was yea, and their Nay was nay; that they kept to a word in their dealings, and that they would not cozen and cheat them; but that if they sent a child to their shops for anything, they were as well used as if they had come themselves; the lives and conversations of Friends did preach, and reached to the witness of God in the people.

George Fox, 1653

Truth is once and the same always, though ages and generations pass away, and one generation goes and another comes, yet the word and power and spirit of the Living God endures forever, and is the same and never changes.

Margaret Fell, 1660

I give myself this advice: Do not fear truth, let it be ever so contrary to inclination and feeling. Never give up the search after it; and let me take courage, and try from the bottom of my heart to do that which I believe truth dictates….

Elizabeth Fry, 1799

While seeking to interpret our Christian faith in the language of today, we must remember that there is one worse thing than failure to practice what we profess, and that is to water down our profession to match our practice.

Friends World Conference, 1952

Integrity is a condition in which a person’s response to a total situation can be trusted: the opposite of a condition in which he would be moved by opportunity or self-seeking impulses breaking up his unity as a whole being. This condition of trust is different from the recognition that he will always be kind or always tell the truth.

Kenneth Barnes, 1972

How do we walk with integrity, Friends to each other; Friends to the world? A while back I heard a Friend say there are three pieces to living faithfully or living with integrity. The first is that you have to have the desire to do it. The desire is planted in you. It doesn’t even come from us really. It is planted there. So we have to ask, “What is it that is being required of me at this moment, at this time, in this place?” The second piece, she said, was that you have to test
what you hear: We hear through ears that also hear a lot of other stuff. So we have to test what we believe. I believe Friends call that discernment. And then, once we have done that, she said the last step was the easy part. You have to act on it. But for me that is one of the hardest parts.

Deborah Fisch, 2006

It occurs to me that every person I’ve met who is committed to integrity is simultaneously committed to knowing themselves, facing the truth about themselves, and accepting responsibility for their moods, actions, and reactions. The search for truth begins within the seeker. It begins when we endeavor to understand our motives and priorities, accepting nothing less than the truth about ourselves, especially when the light of introspection is painful and we don't like what we find. It requires little courage to believe the best about ourselves, but to acknowledge our need for growth is difficult. Facing squarely, scrutinizing ourselves instead of others, changing ourselves rather than insisting others change to suit us, is a solid first step in the life of integrity.

Philip Gulley, 2014

**Advices & Queries – Integrity**

We strive to maintain integrity in word and deed. We recognize the temptations to grow rich at the expense of others, and how apparently harmless indulgence can lead to wrongdoing.

Avoid pretense in clothing, manners, and speech, realizing that false impressions may be conveyed by action and appearance, no less than by words.

In all the settings you find yourself, practice keeping a single and open manner of relating to others. Avoid using different characters in each role you fill.

We live our best lives as Friends when we focus on what Truth and Love require of us, not on our own comfort or contentment.

- How do we use the resources and strength we are given to meet the challenges of living a whole and honest life?
- How do we keep to a single standard of truth in daily life? Do we avoid taking judicial and other oaths?
- How do we fulfill the promises we make?
• Are we responsible about incurring and repaying debts? Are we just and honorable in all our dealings?
• How do we take care that our spiritual growth is not sacrificed to busyness?

Witness

Quaker witness results from our practice of integrity. When we speak Truth through both our words and our lives, we provide an example, or witness, to the world about what we believe that Truth to be. For example, witness occurs when an individual acts to resolve an interpersonal conflict according to Quaker principles. It also occurs communally when a monthly meeting discerns and adopts a minute opposing a military action, promoting social and environmental justice, or addressing some other rising concern. On a broader level, Quaker witness is the guiding concern of organizations such as Friends Committee on National Legislation, which lobbies Congress to pass laws in concert with Quaker beliefs.

Throughout our history Friends have testified that our lives are not meant to conform to the ways of the world but that we are meant to contribute to the transformation of the world through the Light of Truth.

Quotations

Let all nations hear the sound by word or writing. Spare no place, spare no tongue nor pen, but be obedient to the Lord God; go through the world and be valiant for the truth upon earth; tread and trample all that is contrary under…. Be patterns, be examples in all countries, places, islands, nations, wherever you come, that your carriage and life may preach among all sorts of people, and to them. Then you will come to walk cheerfully over the world, answering that of God in every one; whereby in them you may be a blessing, and make the witness of God in them to bless you.

George Fox, 1656

We are a people that follow after those things that make for peace, love, and unity; it is our desire that others’ feet may walk in the same, and do deny and bear our testimony against all strife and wars and contentions…. And our weapons are not carnal, but spiritual…. And so we desire, and also expect
to have liberty of our consciences and just rights and outward liberties, as other people of the nation, which we have promise of, from the word of a king…. Treason, treachery and false dealing we do utterly deny; false dealing, surmising or plotting against any creature on the face of the earth; and [we] speak the Truth in plainness and singleness of heart; and all our desire is your good and peace and love and unity.

Margaret Fell, 1660

True godliness doesn’t turn men out of the world, but enables them to live better in it, and excites their endeavours to mend it; not hide their candle under a bushel, but set it upon a table in a candlestick.

William Penn, 1682

Love was the first motion, and then a concern arose to spend some time with the Indians, that I might feel and understand their life and the spirit they live in, if haply I might receive some instruction from them, or they be in any degree helped forward by my following the leadings of Truth amongst them…..

Afterward, feeling my mind covered with the spirit of prayer, I told the interpreters that I found it in my heart to pray to God, and I believed, if I prayed right, he would hear me, and expressed my willingness for them to omit interpreting, so our meeting ended with a degree of Divine love. Before our people went out I observed Papunehang (the man who had been zealous in laboring for a reformation in that town, being then very tender) spoke to one of the interpreters, and I was afterward told that he said in substance as follows: “I love to feel where words come from.”

John Woolman, 1763

For Friends the most important consideration is not the right action in itself but a right inward state out of which right action will arise. Given the right inward state right action is inevitable. Inward state and outward action are component parts of a single whole.

Howard Brinton, 1943

We must be alert that the warm coziness which we find enveloping us at Yearly Meeting and in our Monthly Meetings does not snare us into imagining that this is all of Quakerism. A vital religion is one which goes from an encounter with the love of God to an encounter in service to that love, no matter how hopeless the situation may be.

Pacific Yearly Meeting, 1967
[S]tart from the premise that to remain silent on crucial issues is to make a conscious decision. It is therefore pointless to remain silent in order to avoid accountability. We will be held responsible for our silence, as well as for our activities; just as the university teachers of the Germany of my childhood were held responsible—morally and fraternally—for their silence and their collaboration with an evil system. We need to think clearly and to speak out together with insights coming from the collective knowledge, experience, and conviction of our community.

Ursula Franklin, 2000

Reading Quaker literature, I am struck by how seriously we take our practical witness in our testimonies to peace with justice, equality, simplicity and community. I find it humbling and moving, and it’s one of the reasons I found my way to the Society in the first place. But it often leaves me with no sense of why Quakers work for peace, justice or equality; what it is, other than gritted-teeth duty, that motivates us.

I think that we do it because we enjoy it, but don’t often say so because deep down we suspect that’s an unworthy reason...the enjoyment I mean...is rejoicing in God’s re-creational presence – however we perceive it – in every moment of our existence. It is not a frivolous adjunct to the serious business of life. To me, it’s what we were created for; it’s both bedrock and our goal.

Jackie Leach Scully, 2002

Above all, the Light is visible in each person who is open to it. It is visible in people’s passion for justice as well as in their relationships with all around them. It is made manifest in the odd mix of fierceness and gentleness of heart they demonstrate as they go about their day.

Margery Post Abbott, 2009

Advices & Queries – Witness

We are glad to tell in words as well as deeds about the Truth and Faith that are in us. We seek fellowship with others of our own faith and with all people, realizing the oneness of humanity under God. Our witness is characterized by humility and a willingness to learn from others. We are constantly reminded that Truth is greater than the knowledge any one of us has of it. God did not put all the fruit on one branch.
We remain open to new leadings of Spirit, while taking care not to outrun our Guide.

Witness calls us into action.

We follow the witness that we are called to, with a whole heart, understanding that no one person can carry the weight of the whole world.

While we seek affinity with others who share the same concerns, we also seek opportunities to find common ground with those who have differing points of view.

Speak Truth to power with love.

- How do our lives testify to our convictions as Friends? What are we doing to share our faith?
- How do we speak Truth tenderly, so that others may hear it?
- What ways do we find to cooperate with people and groups with whom we share beliefs and concerns? Do we listen with love and respect to those with whom we disagree?
- How do we respect and encourage the witness that arises out of our meetings?
- Are we faithful in witnessing to Truth in our community and to the world?

**Civic Responsibility**

Friends’ responsibility toward civic authority requires integrity and discernment. When government acts as a coercive agency, especially when resorting to violence, it may violate Quaker principles. On the other hand, the state commands respect and cooperation when it acts to maintain an orderly society with justice under law for all and to meet human needs.

Friends participate in civic life in a variety of ways. Through the ballot, public witness, legislative advocacy, or holding public office, Friends may contribute to an enlightened and vigorous public life and help shape policies and institutions that are in keeping with Quaker testimonies. Participating in volunteer and non-profit
organizations can be other opportunities to bring Quaker values to bear in our local communities.

Friends do not avoid serving in public office but rather regard it as a form of Quaker witness, recognizing that some actions taken by public authority may conflict with Quaker beliefs. For example, from its earliest days, the Society has held that war is contrary to the will of God. In situations where a Friend is called to support war while in office, a prayerful search for divine guidance assists in determining how to proceed. There may be many other instances where Friends in public office find that their duties put them into conflict with their testimonies, their convictions, or their witness. As Friends have found in the past, it may become necessary to resign their positions rather than violate their principles.

When obedience to the state appears to be contrary to divine law, Friends take prayerful counsel to find the right way forward. This involves testing our resistance to the state through discernment in the meeting community, possibly through a clearness or support committee. When the decision is to refuse obedience, we act openly and make the reasons for our actions clear. If the decision involves incurring legal penalties, Friends generally have suffered willingly and fearlessly for the sake of their convictions. If we are not personally involved in an action of civil disobedience, we strengthen the meeting community by supporting our fellow members with spiritual encouragement and, when necessary, with material aid.

Quotations

…That care be taken, that as any are called before outward powers of the nation, that in the light, obedience to the Lord be given.

…That if any be called to serve the commonwealth in any public service, this is for the public wealth and good, that with cheerfulness it be undertaken, and in faithfulness discharged unto God.

Epistle from the Elders at Balby, 1656

We are not for names, nor men, nor titles of Government, nor are we for this party nor against the other … but we are for justice and mercy and truth and peace and true freedom, that these may be exalted in our nation….

Edward Burrough, 1659
We affirm our unchanging conviction that our first allegiance is to God, and if this conflicts with any compulsion of the State, we serve our countries best by remaining true to our higher loyalty.

Pacific Yearly Meeting, 1953

There is no one Quaker attitude toward politics. Historically, Quakers can be found practicing and preaching almost every possible position from full participation to complete withdrawal and abstention…. If a concerned Quaker (or any man or woman committed to an absolute religious ethic) decides to enter practical politics in order to translate his principles into actuality, he may achieve a relative success: he may be able to raise the level of political life in his time … or maintain a comparatively happy and just and peaceful society, as the Quaker legislators of Pennsylvania did. But he can apparently do it only at a price – the price of compromise, of the partial betrayal of his ideals. If, on the other hand, he decides to preserve his ideals intact, to maintain his religious testimonies unsullied and pure, he may be able to do that, but again at a price – the price of isolation, of withdrawal from the main stream of life in his time, of renouncing the opportunity directly and immediately to influence history.

Frederick Tolles, 1956

We must come from a spirit of love and compassion to help our leaders and many of our fellow citizens come to see that if we truly love God then we must make a drastic change of direction in the course of our country. The only way we will gain respect is by showing it to others, even those we disagree with. The only way we will gain love is by giving it to others, even those we disagree with. Love of country alone sets us on a course towards the disasters that have befallen other countries over the centuries. Charting a new course must begin now before it is too late.

Tom Fox, 2005

**Advices & Queries – Civic Responsibility**

We value the part we have in shaping the laws of our country. It is our task to see that these laws speak to and answer that of God, which we believe is in every person. Our aim is the building of a social order that works toward the expression of divine love. Our first allegiance remains with God.
If, by divine leading, our attention is focused on a law contrary to divine law, we must proceed with care. Before making a decision to oppose a law, we pray for further divine guidance; we consult with others who might be affected by our decision. When we reach clearness, we act with conviction.

When our decision involves disobedience to the law, we make the grounds of our action clear to all concerned. If there are penalties, we suffer them without evasion.

We care for those who suffer for conscience’s sake.

- What are we doing as individuals and as a meeting to carry our share of civic responsibility for our community, state, and nation?
- How are we working for change in government when change is needed?
- How do we discern between meeting our obligations to the state and society and opposing those contrary to Quaker principles?
- What are we doing to uphold those acting under a concern aligned with Quaker belief?
- Do we share our convictions in a spirit of loving concern?
- In what ways do we care for those who are vulnerable or are in poverty in our communities?

**Testimony of Community**

The meeting as community has been central to Friends since the earliest days, when members of the local Quaker community would take care of the families, farms, and businesses of Friends traveling in ministry or imprisoned for professing Truth. Community remains a spiritual as well as a practical safety net – a place for communal discernment and for testing leadings within the shared wisdom of the group.

There can be a holy relationship between individuals and their local Friends community. The meeting supports and strengthens
its members and attenders; the individuals support and strengthen each other, and thereby the community. Thus the worshipping community as a whole reflects what Jesus called “the kingdom of God” and what many Friends today call “the beloved community.” We feel it during worship and in our work and fellowship together.

The spirit of a Friends community might be described as “the testimonies made visible” through the interactions and mutual care of its members. Creating a community of love, trust, compassion, and forbearance, where differences are respected and every voice is valued, is important to our witness to the world. The Friends community inspires, nurtures, and supports our concerns for peace, social justice, and environmental action; it is the seedbed from which our actions grow.

**Quotations**

Once Jesus was asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God was coming, and he answered, “The kingdom of God is not coming with things that can be observed, nor will they say, ‘Look, here it is!’ or ‘There it is!’ For, in fact, the kingdom of God is among you.”

*Luke 17:20-21*

…That no-one speak evil of another, neither judge one against another, but rather judge this, that none put a stumbling-block or occasion to fall in his brother’s way.

*Epistle from the Elders at Balby, 1656*

Our life is love, and peace, and tenderness; and bearing one with another, and forgiving one another, and not laying accusations one against another; but praying one for another, and helping one another up with a tender hand.

*Isaac Penington, 1667*

…[W]hen I came into the silent assemblies of God’s people, I felt a secret power among them, which touched my heart, and as I gave way unto it, I found the evil weakening in me and the good raised up, and so I became thus knit and united unto them, hungering more and more after the increase of this power and life, whereby I might feel myself perfectly redeemed.

*Robert Barclay, 1678*
There is a principle which is pure, placed in the human mind, which in different places and ages hath had different names. It is, however, pure and proceeds from God. It is deep and inward, confined to no forms of religion, nor excluded from any, where the heart stands in perfect sincerity. In whomsoever this takes root and grows, of what nation soever, they become brethren in the best sense of the expression.

John Woolman, 1774

A worshipful community is a healing community in which we reveal ourselves without fear, trusting our vulnerability to that Spirit which alone knows our hearts. There is the dialogue of soul with Spirit and the sharing of that with each other. In these ways we lift each other up tenderly.

Shirley Ruth Parks Tweed, 1982

It is often hard to accept that other people have their own valid relationship with God, their own specialness and insights. We are not just disciples — we are disciples together.

Our vision of the truth has to be big enough to include other people’s truth as well as our own. We have to learn to love difficult unlovable people. Accepting each other, and each other’s relationship with God, let us continue to hold together at our deepest level. We are a forgiven community. Part of the cost of discipleship is living with the other disciples.

Beth Allen, 1984

[Early] Quakerism was not an individualistic faith. Quakers trusted God’s Spirit to draw each person into her place in the community and expected her and her gifts to flourish in the context of being loved, loving, and serving in that body. The individual became fully herself only as she experienced her connection to the community. To be cut off from the body was to lose one’s source of life and to wither and die spiritually.

Margaret Benefiel, 1996

In the kindergarten of the School of Love that we attend with one another in community, we can lead one another by meeting love with love. With grace, we may even be able to meet unlove with love. …

Un-self-centered behavior is hard for humans. It’s especially hard today because popular modern psychology … encourages self-fulfillment and self-assertion as priorities that — without great care — can foster self-centeredness. These cultural priorities are one reason for the need for communities with
a commitment or covenant to aspire to self-transcendence rather than self-fulfillment, to mutuality as well as a personal relationship with the Divine. Spiritual communities are where we practice the counter-cultural behaviors of living love with others committed to the same struggle, where we encourage and admonish one another in tenderness.

Patricia Loring, 1999

Community is not just about those closest to us, or those with whom we feel the most comfortable. I believe that God calls us to break out of our comfort zones and build community across differences. This means promoting a multicultural and inclusive vision for our society.

Danielle Short, 2007

Many Friends describe the experience of their first visit to meeting as “coming home.” It is only with God’s Spirit that such a diverse group of individuals can realize and embody the kind of unity, belonging, and community that answers to that of God within us.

The Quaker meeting is meant to be a blessed community – a living testimony to a social order that embodies God’s peace, justice, love, compassion, and joy, and an example and invitation to a better way of life. Like our other testimonies, community can be a prophetic call to the rest of society.

Southeastern Yearly Meeting, 2007

Friends, we have had enough of “rugged individualism.” The kingdom of Heaven comes to us in the first-person plural, not the first-person singular.

Joe Snyder, 2016

Advices & Queries – Community

“Let your life speak” is traditional advice for Friends. The life of a Quaker meeting also speaks: by giving practical support for members and attenders in need; cherishing the children and young people finding their spiritual paths; encouraging, guiding, and eldering Friends with love in discernment or in following leadings; welcoming new seekers; and stepping forth in Spirit-led witness in the wider world.

Being part of a community requires us to practice compassion and patience. As members of a community, we pay attention to each other and rely on each other; we consciously nurture our
interdependence. It’s not always easy. It’s nevertheless vital to our shared spiritual journey.

- How do we foster love, truth, and harmony within our meeting community?
- Is our community a shelter where we can grow in the Spirit? How can our community provide the best combination of safety and challenge to encourage spiritual growth?
- How do we as individuals share our gifts with the meeting? How do we as a community help individual Friends find their own gifts and share them with others?
- How do we as individuals support the spiritual health of the meeting? How do we as a community support the spiritual health of individual members and attenders?
- How do we make our meeting a beloved community and a living testimony – for all members and attenders, wherever they are in their own spiritual journeys?
- How do we create a radically inclusive culture in our Quaker community?
- How does our meeting community reflect the Spirit and Truth at the center of our lives?

Unity

Unity arises within the gathered meeting. Knowledge of our historic witness and spiritual discipline and mutual love prepare us for our life together. Through unity, the sense of being gathered, we may feel assured of the authenticity of our experience. Different ways of understanding the divine life can arise among us. These differences are not to be ignored for the sake of superficial agreement. They are better recognized and understood, so that a deeper and more vital unity can be reached.

Convictions which might divide or disrupt us can, through divine grace, help to make the meeting creative and strong. Friends are encouraged to keep faith and fellowship with each other, waiting in the Light for that unity which draws us together in Truth and Love.
When new witness arises within a meeting, it may occasion a season of disquiet as we discern its nature and meaning. New light can be given to any one among us. We do well to remain open to what the Innermost Word calls forth among us. Revelation is ongoing, providing illumination and guidance to the individual and through individuals to the whole.

Through practical and ongoing devotion, we are drawn into an experience of being gathered as a beloved community. Frequent fellowship is vital to maintaining our life together. As we grow in love and knowledge of one another we are more able to dwell together in singleness, wholeness, and unity.

For unity in the context of Quaker decision making, see Chapter 5, “The Monthly Meeting.”

**Quotations**

…That Christian moderation be used towards all men: that they who obey not the word, may be won [by] those that in the word dwell, to guide in an holy life and godly conversation.

*Epistle from the Elders at Balby, 1656*

Oh, how sweet and lovely it is to see brethren dwell together in unity, to see the true image of God raised in persons, and they knowing and loving one another in that image, and bearing with one another through love, and helping one another under their temptations and distresses of spirit, which every one must expect to meet with…. The way is one; and he that is in the faith, and in the obedience to that light which shines from the Spirit into the heart of every believer, hath a taste of the one heart and the one way, and knoweth that no variety of practices, which is of God, can make a breach in the true unity.

*Isaac Penington, 1659*

*The Lord is with you my tender Friends. Yea, I say, Israel’s God is among you. He will give you wisdom and strength, as you wait upon him. Therefore be encouraged in the blessed work of the Lord, unto which you are called. Be bold and valiant for the truth, to withstand all the false pretenders to love and unity, and are in a dividing Spirit, and secretly endeavoring to disturb the Churches’ peace. Stand up on the strength of the Lord, and in the power of his might against all such which would destroy your comely Order (into which the Lord hath gathered you) and bring all into Confusion as they are. As your Hearts*
are inclined to this good work, the Lord who is rich in mercy and goodness, he
will fill your Quivers with polished Arrows, and cause your Bow to abide in
strength and so furnish you with his heavenly virtues to enable you for his work
and service that he calls you to that hard things will be made easy unto you.

Theophila Townsend, 1686

The unity of Christians never did nor ever will or can stand in uniformity of
thought and opinion, but in Christian love only.

Thomas Story, 1737

The attainment of unity within the meeting is not the same as the attainment
of uniformity. Unity is spiritual, uniformity mechanical. Friends have never
required of the members assent to a religious or social creed, though not
infrequently a body of Friends has issued a statement expressing their religious
or social views at a particular time. There is, however, always the reservation
that the Spirit of Truth may lead to further insight. Differences within the
group on the particular application of general principles are tolerated, provided
they are being actively explored in a spirit of friendship and a continued search
for truth. Such differences are often of great value in helping new aspects of
truth to emerge.

Howard Brinton, 1952

The purpose of our Meetings for Worship for Business is precisely this: we
meet not to make decisions, but to build a community of witness: what have
we found corporately? The sense of the meeting is not unanimity. I have had
the experience of concurring in a sense of meeting with which I disagreed,
knowing it was the sense of the meeting. I have wept, wishing the meeting
could go further than it clearly was ready to go, but it clearly was not. But
my concurring with the sense of the meeting meant that I accepted my faith
community where it was, for it is only in affirming clearly where we are that
we can add more on.

Jan Hoffman, 1988

Openness to the prospect that God works in multiple and unexpected ways is
changing Quaker practice. It also gives hope and encouragement to those who
seek to find a unity that reaches beyond words.

Margery Post Abbott, 1997
I believe that we continually deepen our spiritual roots. However, there is a challenge before us to further nurture these roots and enhance our lives with dignity and spirituality. I believe that each individual possesses gifts of the Spirit to help achieve this through opening out hearts to the Light from God so this Light flows through us.

This is where unity through diversity comes into focus as we move out across other barriers and communities to “answer that of God in each person” as a “vessel” for the Light to flow to others on our path.

Donald Laitin, 1997

Forgiveness is an important part of the unity process and we can’t overstate that. We need to be able to say “I’m sorry” and be open to hearing that and move on. Openness is central to the unity process.

Laura Magnani, 2008

**Advices & Queries – Unity**

Unity is found in God’s will. If we are divided, when we listen in the Spirit together the way forward will become clear.

Each of us has particular transcendent experiences, and each must find ways to be true to them. When an expression of that experience is strange or disturbing, we try to sense where it comes from and how it might nourish the lives of others.

People understand the Divine in many different ways.

Listen patiently and seek the truth which other people’s opinions may contain for you. Avoid using hurtful criticism or language chosen to provoke anger or fear.

Do not allow the strength of your convictions to betray you into making statements or allegations that are unfair or untrue.

Think it possible that you may be mistaken.

Cultivate affectionate regard and mutual care for each other. Look for times and occasions in addition to meeting on first days to gather together affirming a common life that leads to a deeper unity.

- When problems and conflicts arise, how do we work to resolve them in a spirit of love and humility?
• How do we let go of our individual desires and let the Holy Spirit lead us to unity?
• How do we open ourselves to the diversity of culture, language, and expressions of faith in our yearly meeting and in the world community of Friends?
• How do we respect the reputations of others? Do we avoid gossip? Do we protect necessary confidentiality?
• How careful are we to avoid manipulating and exploiting one another?

**Mutual Care**

We nurture personal relationships within our Quaker communities by engaging in social and recreational gatherings in addition to our involvement in meetings for worship, business, and committee work. Reading groups, spiritual sharing groups, and affinity groups deepen our lives together. When we learn about each other as individuals, we more readily share joys and sorrows, express our needs, and extend our care for each other in deeper ways. While recognizing our own limits and boundaries, we become mutually supportive, loving Friends in every sense of the word.

**Quotations**

*I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.*

*John 13:34-35*

…That none be busy bodies in others’ matters, but each one to bear another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ; that they be sincere and without offence, and that all things that are honest, be done without murmuring, and disputing, that you may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation amongst whom they may shine as lights in the world.

*Epistle from the Elders at Balby, 1656*

*We know ourselves as individuals but only because we live in community. Love, trust, fellowship, selflessness are all mediated to us through our interdependence. Just as we could not live physically without each other, we*
cannot live spiritually in isolation. We are individually free but also community bound. We cannot act without affecting others and others cannot act without affecting us. We know ourselves as we are reflected in the faces, action and attitudes of each other.

Janet Scott, 1980

Friends have always been especially sensitive to and questioning about the ways in which human beings relate to each other, in a continuing re-examination of their own inner and outer relationships. This consistent component of Quakerism has resulted in the equally consistent and insistent habit Friends have of looking upon and treating all human beings as persons, regardless of age, color, economic status, religion, occupation, [sexual orientation,] or gender.

Mary Calderone, 1989

It is vitally important for others to stand alongside the individual who is weighed down by burdens. In every community of Friends there will be those who carry burdens more lightly, sometimes with optimism and political passion, sometimes with mystical understanding and conviction, sometimes with intense realism and practical planning. There will also be those who are heavily burdened, more pessimistic, more daunted by political processes — those at a stage in life when less uplifted, with less enthusiasm or energy for long-term activity or campaigning, with less confidence in God. There will be those who are burned out or just plain ill. We need to recognize this and work practically within our strengths, reinforced by our faith.

We need to remember that we gain strength from being a worshipping community, part of a people of God. So what does it mean to be a people of God, living the life of faith and overflowing with hope?

Christine Davis, 2007

In the presence of others I become aware of motion and a great journey. In turning all my heart on the care of others I find clues to the Way, to this strange path which I am on. I learn in vivid clarity of moving through the darkness, of windows penetrating the walls of my existence and great openings giving space for inner refuse to pour out. As others care for me and in their concern I come to be aware of the brilliance of potential, of sparks of new life. We come to know God in our relationships with others. We learn new ways of being with others and loving them through the love that comes from God.

Margery Post Abbott, 2012
**Advises & Queries – Mutual Care**

Our needs for love and care, and our response to these needs in others, make up a rich part of our lives. In an exchange truly grounded in love, each of us is both giver and receiver, ready to help and accept help. Neither pride nor fear keeps us from the unconditional love and care of God manifested through others. Let neither comfort nor self-centeredness blind us to our need for others.

We listen to one another with openness of heart and in good faith, aware that greater wisdom than our own is required to meet our human needs. We lift up our hearts to the Source of all wisdom and power.

- In what ways do we bring together members and attenders, young and old, in love and community?
- Are we sensitive to each other’s personal needs and difficulties? How do we assist in useful ways?
- Do we visit one another in our homes and keep in touch with distant members?
- How do we listen to one another, even beyond words?
- How do we provide mutual care while acknowledging our own limitations?
- How well are we able to love each other unconditionally?

**Home and Family**

Each of us creates home and all of us create family. In our homes we nurture fellowship, education, and community for the meeting. In our homes the realm of God can be made real. Ideally, family is an expression of deep emotional unity and shared history. This depth can provide a precious bonding of people and bring forth joy and spiritual growth. It may also bring forth anguish when family ties break down, or a loved one suffers.

Family life is strengthened by recognizing that all family members, and indeed all people, are God’s children, and that we are called to nurture and love each other as members of divine creation. In
the Light in the eyes of our children, in the loving expression of adults, we feel holy love at work in the life of our families.

We also recognize the sense of family and home that we find in the life of the meeting. For many single people or people without family, this is an important role of the meeting. We have concern for the well-being of the meeting, of the people it comprises, and of the wider world to which it belongs. Together we can participate in God’s work on earth.

Meetings have a responsibility to nurture families in all their variety. Meetings support marriages and committed relationships between adults. (See Chapter 10.) The meeting can support, yet does not replace, the family in the care of children. For example, we assist in time of crisis or need, offer religious education for children, and make time for parents of young children to “catch their breath.” Within the local Friends community, parents may be able to share the joys and challenges of parenting with others as we endeavor to make the homes we envision.

Any combination of adults and children or adults without children can make a family. Family is a place where it is safe to be one’s self and receive the encouragement of other family members to grow and expand. The family is a primary place to explore ways of living out Truth. Here the seed of God can be nurtured and cherished. Here is a place for love and commitment to be practiced – giving greater strength for the world beyond the home and meeting.

We are called, as we are able, to make home a place of hospitality – a place to nurture fellowship, education, and community for the meeting. We value visiting in one another’s homes. In many worship groups, homes provide the space for meetings for worship and business.

A single person, too, can make a home, extend hospitality, nurture intimate friendships, and engage in passionate social action. There is also much to learn of the gift of solitude and stillness from those who either choose to live alone or find themselves alone.

In our homes the Realm of God can be made real.
**Abuse in Families.** In any close family relationship, the exercise of inappropriate power can result in physical, psychological, or sexual abuse. In the face of the social isolation often associated with an abusive home, those victimized may feel alone and desperate. Friends are advised to remain alert to the possibility of domestic abuse and sensitive to the signs of such situations. Meetings are encouraged to create communities of trust in which those suffering trauma can find support.

**Quotations**

…That husbands and wives dwell together according to knowledge, as being heirs together of the grace of life; that children obey their parents in the Lord; and that parents provoke not their children to wrath, but bring them up in the nurture and fear of God, walking before them as good examples, in gravity and godliness; providing things honest in the sight of God and man.

_Epistle from the Elders at Balby, 1656_

A husband and a wife that love one another show their children … that they should do so too. Others visibly lose their authority in their families by their contempt of one another; and teach their children to be unnatural by their own examples.

_William Penn, 1693_

Home-making is a Quaker service in its own right. It should be recognized as such and a proper balance preserved, so that other activities — even the claims of Quaker service in other fields — should not be allowed to hinder its growth.

_London Yearly Meeting, 1959_

What makes any relationship, any action, right is caring — caring for the other person, for things, for the earth, and for oneself. George and I put words from Walt Whitman in our marriage ceremony to express what we wanted our marriage to be: ‘a union of equal comrades.’ … We have kept the goal of being a union of equal comrades, granting each other space to be ourselves and to grow towards wholeness.

_Elizabeth Watson, 1977_

There is little question that if as a parent we have not taken the time really to listen to children when they are young, listened not only to their words but to their feelings behind the words, they are unlikely to want to come with their
sharings in later life. Learning to listen to each other in families can help to make us better listeners to others and to the Inner Guide.

Dorothy Steere, 1984

Of course, parents will not get it right all the time. We are all going to mess up. But God loves us in spite of our weakness and contradictions. In spite of our shortcomings, there is hope for families to be places of belonging and trust, leading us to healing and freedom. The Gospel is full of stories where Jesus welcomes people, especially those who are outcasts, living at the edges of society. He meets them with unconditional love: acceptance, inclusion, and forgiveness. As a microcosm of God’s kingdom, the family is based on forgiveness…. Christ reaches out to the best in each of us and calls us to do the same with one another. And when we get it right at home, our whole family gets a glimpse of the eternal: God’s love and God’s kingdom.

Mary Kay Rehard, 2002

Loves makes a family.

Bonnie Tinker, 2002

Advices & Queries – Home and Family

Live in the assurance that all are children of God.

Hospitality in the home is a vital force for spiritual nurture; it helps all family members learn to respond to that of God in everyone.

Know that a family may be made of single adults, of differing combinations of adults, or of adults and children, sharing a bond of love. Meeting provides an essential sense of family for those without families, including those made single after years of marriage or other life commitment.

We give home and family priority in our lives.

The meeting can support, yet cannot replace, the family in the care of children. At the same time, every member of meeting is responsible in some measure for the care of families, including children.

Stay aware of the many ways the meeting can act as a family – and the ways it cannot.
Be both bold and tender in offering assistance to families that may be experiencing discord or domestic abuse.

- How do we make our homes places of friendliness, peace, and renewal, where Spirit is real for those who live there and those who visit?
- How do we maintain a climate of love and trust in our meeting which invites families to be open about their satisfactions and challenges?
- How do we keep commitments outside the home from encroaching on the time and loving attention the family needs for its health and well-being?
- Does our home life support our need for both a sense of personal identity and shared living?
- What supports do we offer to the aging, the widowed, the separated or divorced, and members of families affected by disruption or trauma?
- How does the meeting assist families to improve communication, family life, and the rearing of children in a context of love?

**The Meeting and Friends of All Ages**

Every age group brings its own gifts – and its own challenges – to the meeting community. Children can enlighten adults with their questions; adults can be role models for children. Teenagers often struggle with reaching independence while elders often struggle with giving it up. Meetings may sponsor intergenerational activities, including worship-sharing, that can help Friends of all ages share their perspectives and respond lovingly. We take care to look for that of God in each person, no matter how young or old they are.

**Children and Teenagers.** Along with their parents and caretakers, others in the meeting help foster children’s emerging spiritual lives by recognizing and encouraging their individual gifts. A meeting community can become like an extended family for children, to the benefit of all.
Meetings foster Quaker values in children by providing religious education. Although small groups may not be able to offer a full “First-Day school,” every group takes care to nurture children’s growth in the Spirit and to include them in activities.

The meeting continues to offer trust, deep listening, and a steady sense of acceptance to teenagers as they seek greater independence and a new sense of self. Conversation with Friends of other generations may help adolescents explore their own values during this time of transition and vulnerability.

Meetings acknowledge the gifts of young people by including them in the work of meeting committees or projects, thereby encouraging them to take on some of the responsibilities of being a Friend.

Young people become aware of themselves as Friends through meeting for worship, religious education, their family lives, and friendships within their own age group. Meetings with few adolescent attenders can help make opportunities for their youth to gather in larger regional groups, which encourage participation and a lasting connection to the Religious Society of Friends.

**Young Adults.** Like adolescents, young adults who are balancing work, school, and social relationships often find a strong sense of community among others of a similar age and may prefer to focus on regional and national gatherings, such as the annual Western Young Friends New Year’s Gathering. Some local communities also support informal gatherings of young adult Friends.

One challenge for meetings is to engage with all young adults, whether they grew up in the meeting or have come to Friends as new attenders. Possibilities include fostering spiritual fellowship, asking for service, offering clearness committees, and providing resources that encourage growth into the fullness of their gifts and lives. It is especially important to recognize that those once known as children and youth are now adults and to affirm them as valuable peers.

**Adults in the Middle Years.** Meetings can help adults in the middle years find balance when they become over-busy
at the expense of their spiritual lives. Meetings may be able to offer practical help to Friends with simultaneous responsibilities to children and aging parents. Friends can help each other find clearness regarding new enterprises, such as second careers or voluntary service.

Adults in the middle years may find themselves taking leadership in their meetings, while at the same time learning to lean gracefully upon the meeting’s spiritual and practical support as they themselves age. The meeting may depend heavily on Friends of middle years for committee work. This adds what for some might feel like a burden of expectation and for others an opportunity for discernment of their leadings.

**Later Years.** Friends in their later years strive to accept the diminishments of age with good grace, and meetings strive to accommodate older Friends’ needs as much as possible. Friends who no longer drive may need help with transportation to worship and meeting activities. Those with hearing impairments may benefit from sound systems, scribes, and printed materials to stay active in the life of the meeting. Some meetings may be able to offer clearness processes about living arrangements and other significant decisions, and some can provide ongoing help to aging adults through care and support committees.

The relationship of older Friends to the meeting does not end when they are no longer able to attend worship or other meeting events. Older Friends can make vital contributions through telephone calls, correspondence, visits, and prayer. The meeting may arrange for worship or committee meetings to be held in a housebound Friend’s residence. These measures encourage a mutual relationship in which younger Friends appreciate the presence and worth of older Friends, and older Friends know that they are remembered, valued, cared for, and loved.

**End of Life.** In ways both practical and spiritual, the meeting community helps Friends prepare for death, which we know can come at any time. We foster ever-present readiness of spirit for whatever life may bring. Love and support from the meeting community can help us deal with many losses: dreams and hopes,
mobility, sight or hearing, memory and mental acuity. At the same time, wise elders facing those losses have much to teach others by their example.

Spiritual preparation for death and loss is ongoing. We may find comfort in Scripture, literature, music, and art. The spiritual and practical support of caring Friends has great value; it matters more than eloquent words. We do not let our feelings of inadequacy keep us away from those who are seriously ill or dying.

For practical responsibilities concerning the end of life, including memorial meetings, see Chapter 11, “Death and Memorials.”

**Bereavement.** Grieving requires time. The meeting’s support to the bereaved may need to continue well beyond an initial period of loss. Bereaved children may need special attention and opportunities to express their grief. When others mourn, we seek to let our love embrace them.

**Quotations**

[Children] are God’s Creatures, and given to Parents as a Gift from him, upon whom they are to improve their utmost Diligence, that they may grow up in the Fear of God. Parents should not overlook things in their Children through fond Affection which they know by the Light of Jesus to be evil and bad; [nor] speak to them in a slender Reproof…. Neither ought any one to be bitter to their Children, nor to require more of them than we know they are of Ability to perform; and when they fall short of their Duty, not to Correct them in our own Wills, nor in a Wrathful Angry Mind — for that Mind is itself for Correction….

Geertruyd Deriks Niesen, 1677

I expect to pass through this world but once. Any good therefore that I can do, or any kindness that I can show to any fellow creature, let me do it now. Let me not defer or neglect it, for I shall not pass this way again.

attributed to Stephen Grellet, ca. 1850

Children have much to teach us. If we cultivated the habit of dialogue and mutual learning, our children could keep us growing, and in a measure could bring us into their future….

Elizabeth Watson, 1975
Perhaps the most neglected of all the advices is that we should live adventurously. If there is one wish I would pray the Spirit to put into our Christmas stockings, it is warmth, openness, passion, a bit of emotion that doesn’t mind making a fool of itself occasionally.

_Gerald Priestland, 1977_

For me only two things now seem sure. One is that time must have a stop, and the other is that whatever lies over and around mortal time is not to be feared. With that, I shall have to be content.

_Norma Jacob, 1981_

If we can daily face loss as the growing edge in living, we begin to understand that all these small surrenders are a rehearsal for the physical death that each of us must ultimately face. And that physical death will become easier if we consciously accept all of life’s small deaths, repeatedly practicing letting go of our self-will. Therefore, to practice the labor of dying as growth towards new horizons, we must live in harmony with the eternal creative process.

_Lucy McIver, 1998_

I feel no need to live to a ripe old age. I already have. ... I believe that we all need to reflect together how we might be able to make a difference, as we come to the final stages of our lives. We can use our imaginations, and create legacies while we are still alive and by how we die.

_Peg Morton, 2013_

**Advices & Queries – The Meeting and Friends of All Ages**

The meeting community is the seedbed of our spiritual lives.

Meetings heed the needs of their members and attenders as they move along their life journeys.

As Friends we place a high value on intergenerational activities to nurture life in the Spirit.

- How do we recognize and cherish the contributions that Friends of all ages make to our Quaker community?
- How does our meeting stay tender to those who may be discomforted by children?
• How do we value each other as children of God without prejudice based on age?
• How does our meeting walk alongside members and attenders at all stages of their lives?
• How does living in Quaker community nurture a meaningful life?

Sexuality
Our physical and spiritual selves are an integrated whole. Our sexuality shapes how we understand ourselves and how we understand and relate to others.

Our sexual nature can be both a blessing and a source of vulnerability. Understanding our own sexuality is a journey. Despite a growing appreciation of human sexuality and its role in our lives, there is lingering ignorance, misunderstanding, and fear. Sex education with open discussion and accurate, unbiased, readily available information is therefore important for everyone, children and adults alike. We are open to grace and we seek knowledge, understanding, and tenderness toward each other.

We recognize that sexual orientation is a full spectrum and that gender identity may be fluid. We affirm that all are children of God and valuable members of the beloved community, however they identify themselves.

Parents and the meeting can encourage children in exploring and understanding their sexuality by constructively supporting each child’s natural interest and answering questions honestly and lovingly. Parents teach their children primarily by the example of their lives. Ideally they demonstrate mutual love, affection, consideration, and trust in a lasting relationship that includes sexual joy.

The Spirit guides us to integrate our sexual behavior with Friends testimonies. In the context of a loving and committed relationship, sex is joyous and sacramental.

Friends are not immune from committing sexual harassment, exploitation, abuse, and violence. These acts reflect power
imbalance and anger, not healthy sexuality, and can do deep and lasting damage. Casual or careless sexual activity can also lead to emotional and physical suffering. In dealing with sexual matters, care and concern for others is no less important than care and concern for ourselves.

**Quotations**

*I am my beloved’s, and my beloved is mine….*

...  
*Set me as a seal upon your heart, as a seal upon your arm;*  
*For love is as strong as death, passion fierce as the grave.*  
*Its flashes are flashes of fire, a raging flame.*  
*Many waters cannot quench love, neither can floods drown it.*

*Song of Solomon 6:3a; 8:6-7a*

Sexuality, looked at dispassionately, is neither good nor evil — it is a fact of nature and a force of immeasurable power. But looking at it as Christians we have felt impelled to state without reservation that it is a glorious gift of God. Throughout the whole of living nature it makes possible an endless and fascinating variety of creatures, a lavishness, a beauty of form and colour surpassing all that could be imagined as necessary to survival.

“Towards a Quaker View of Sex,” revised edition, 1964

*The mystery of sex continues to be greater than our capacity to comprehend it, no matter how much we learn about it. We engage in it, in often too frantic efforts to enjoy it but, more subtly, also to try to fathom its ever recurring power over us. Surely this power and its mystery relate to the mystery of God’s relationship to us. The mistake we have made throughout the ages has been to load onto sex the incubus of success or failure of marriage, to look upon sex as a resolution, an ending. In reality it offers us, if we could only see it, a fresh beginning every time in that relationship of which it is a part.*

*Mary Calderone, 1973*

*All our senses are given to us to enjoy and to praise God. The smell of the sea, of the blossom borne on the wind, of the soft flesh of a little baby; the taste of a ripe plum or bread fresh from the oven, the feel of warm cat’s fur, or the body of a lover – these are all forms of thanksgiving prayer. I am sure that it is as wrong to fail to delight in our bodies as it is to misuse them through excess. Not*
to be a glutton does not mean that we may not delight in good food; not to be ruled by lust does not mean that we must not enjoy the exquisite pleasures of sex; not to be slothful does not mean that we must not lie in the sun, not doing, just being. When Jesus said, “I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly,” I do not think He was speaking only of spiritual life — I think He meant us to have positive delight in all the good things in this wonderful world which His Father created.

Bella Bown, ca. 1980

Our sexuality is ultimately tied to who we are as spiritual persons. The spiritual life enhances our sexuality and gives it direction. Our sexuality gives an earthy wholeness to our spirituality. Our spirituality and our sexuality come into a working harmony in the life of the kingdom of God.

Richard Foster, 1985

We are learning that radical inclusion and radical love bring further light to Quaker testimony and life.

Friends for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transsexual, and Queer Concerns, 1999

Our feelings get confused in a sexual relationship. Being “in love” is not a reliable feeling and not necessarily a leading from the Spirit. Before launching into a lifelong commitment and bringing children into the world, it makes sense to ask for guidance from the Spirit. We can ask Friends to help us reach clarity that we are being our true selves in this relationship.

Jenny Spinks, 2007

We have felt painfully the intense divisions among Friends over sexuality and sexual morality. Many of those present this week felt led to explore deeply together what God requires of us in this area. Tender intergenerational sharing took place about these issues. This was enriched by open discussion of the brokenness we have experienced when sexual behaviors are not consistent with God’s will. We have found a new degree of unity in the call to witness to the importance of mutual faithfulness and commitment in all sexual relationships.

Epistle from Quakercamp at Stillwater, 2007
**Advices & Queries – Sexuality**

We do well to look past the outward appearances of orientation and identity to see the quality of all individuals and relationships in our meetings. Just as there is that of God in every person, there is that of God in every relationship that calls upon God. We remain tender toward all relationships founded on integrity, mutual respect, commitment, and love.

When dealing with issues of sexuality and sexual behavior, we strive for an appropriate balance between open, honest discussion and protection of privacy and confidentiality for individual members and attenders.

We take care to avoid sexual behavior based on license, exploitation, oppression, and violence in our personal lives and to witness against such behavior in our meetings and communities.

Parents support their children’s healthy sexuality by providing good examples, constructively supporting each child’s natural interest, and answering questions lovingly.

Friends are encouraged to maintain accurate resources on issues of sexuality, sexual behavior, and gender identity and to answer questions, especially from children, honestly and appropriately.

While the meeting can and should be a source of abiding love and support to members and attenders, we acknowledge that some situations may require professional intervention and others may require notification of law-enforcement authorities.

- Do we accept and appreciate our sexuality as part of our humanity and as a gift from God? How do we integrate our sexuality and our spirituality?
- How can we help each other be faithful in expressing our sexuality? Do we support members and attenders with love and care relating to their sexuality and gender identity?
- How safe is our meeting? How do we create an environment appropriate for discussion of deeply personal issues?
- How willing are we to talk openly and listen carefully when others’ ideas and behavior are different from our own? How
do we respond to that of God in them while acknowledging our own discomfort or disagreement?

- As individuals and as a meeting community, do we avoid stereotyping and judging people based on their relationships, sexual orientation, or gender identity?

- How do we love and respond to those who have been harmed by sexual discrimination, abuse, or violence? How do we love and respond to those who have committed the discrimination, abuse, or violence?

- Do we know how and when to refer members and attenders for professional help? Do we know how and when to contact legal authorities?

**Testimony of Peace**

From early in our history, Quakers have taken a clear stand for peace and against military action. This is our most well known and widely accepted testimony, and one of our oldest. It came from the clear vision early Friends had of a world transformed by Love. They believed that using violence to deal with conflict was contrary to the Spirit of Christ. George Fox declared that he lived “in the virtue of that life and power that [takes] away the occasion of all war.” In a declaration to King Charles II in 1660, Fox and other Quaker leaders said, “We utterly deny all outward wars and strife, and fightings with outward weapons, for any end or under any pretense whatsoever.”

The testimony of peace doesn’t mean that Quakers are passive. Friends turn to the weapons of the spirit – love, honesty, good will, imagination, compassion, humor – which allow God to reach out through us to those with whom we are in conflict. Since we know there is that of God in every person, we know each person is worthy of infinite respect. Friends stand as a positive witness in a world still torn by strife and violence. When we open ourselves to the divine Presence, we can do no less than use this gift in and among ourselves, and we work to manifest it in the world.
Since our first allegiance is to the Spirit of Truth and Love, we must obey divine calling rather than human law when this allegiance is challenged by the demands of the state. We support conscientious objectors and those who resist any cooperation with the military. We recognize that many aspects of the military system are inconsistent with Jesus’ example of love. We hold in love those of our members who feel that they must enter the armed forces.

Our peace testimony begins with opposition to war and is a positive affirmation of the power of good to overcome evil. We seriously consider the implications of our employment, our investments, our payment of taxes, and our manner of living as they relate to violence at all levels. We remain sensitive to the covert as well as the overt violence inherent in some of our long-established social practices and institutions, including unfettered capitalism and the unjust distribution of wealth. We work to change those elements which violate our conviction that there is that of God in everyone.

Our historic peace testimony must be also a living testimony as we work to give concrete expression to our ideals. We seek to alleviate the suffering caused by war and injustice – and the suffering and injustice that cause war. We refrain from participating in all forms of violence and repression to the best of our understanding. We support efforts toward restorative justice and unbiased policing. We support efforts to secure international agreements for the control of armaments and to remove the domination of militarism in our society. We are involved in building national and transnational institutions to deal with conflict nonviolently. The threat of total nuclear war and annihilation remains with us in the twenty-first century and elimination of that threat is ever more urgent.

**Quotations**

*So the keeper of the House of Correction was commanded to bring me up before the Commissioners and soldiers in the market place; and there … asked me if I would not take up arms for the Commonwealth against the King. But I told them I lived in the virtue of that life and power that took away the*
occasion of all wars, and I knew from whence all wars did rise, from the lust according to James’ doctrine [James 4:1]…. But I told them I was come into the covenant of peace which was before wars and strifes were.

George Fox, 1651

We utterly deny all outward wars and strife, and fightings with outward weapons, for any end, or under any pretense whatsoever; this is our testimony to the whole world…. The Spirit of Christ, by which we are guided, is not changeable, so as once to command us from a thing as evil, and again to move unto it; and we certainly know, and testify to the world, that the Spirit of Christ, which leads us into all truth, will never move us to fight and war against any man with outward weapons, neither for the Kingdom of Christ nor for the kingdoms of this world…. Therefore, we cannot learn war any more.

A Declaration of the Harmless and Innocent People of God, Called Quakers,… Concerning Wars and Fightings, 1660

There is a spirit which I feel that delights to do no evil, nor to revenge any wrong, but delights to endure all things, in hope to enjoy its own in the end. Its hope is to outlive all wrath and contention, and to weary out all exaltation and cruelty, or whatever is of a nature contrary to itself….

James Nayler, 1660

A good end cannot sanctify evil means; nor must we ever do evil that good may come of it. … Let us then try what love will do.

William Penn, 1693

[These who propose to hold aloof from fighting and claim the privileges of peace must become devoted peace-makers. This is not to be construed to apply alone to those who bring wars to an end … nor does it mean [only] those who make public peace addresses or who sign petitions or who … attend peace conferences and conventions. It applies rather to a deeper and more continuous service of living an everyday life which is “in the covenant of peace.” It means a home life which exhibits the sway and dominion of love practised in the domain of the family life. It means a neighbourhood life which makes love prevail between man and man and between woman and woman. It means a business life which translates and interprets, as much at least as one individual can do it, the principles which underlie the sway and kingdom of God.

Rufus Jones, 1927
We must abide the slowness of the organic. An inanimate bomb reaches its goal swiftly, annihilating whatever is in its way. A living object is soft and pliant, slowly adjusting its environment to itself. It must always depend on small beginnings, germ cells which are perhaps invisible. The pacifist is not afraid of minute beginnings, aimed at the distant future. Violence works quickly, but in the realm of life results are never swift.

Howard Brinton, 1943

Friends’ peace testimony challenges us all to be peace educators. We may not all be teachers, but we are all communicators, and we all need to be learners. Peace education should be seen as an integral part of our peace testimony. But it is essentially something one does, and not something one talks about…. Learning, to be educated, means changing one’s behavior, and peace education therefore aims at changing our own individual behavior. We communicate our values by the manner of our lives, but how many of us negate the peaceful attitudes we fervently profess by our own aggressive behavior?

Eva Pinthus, 1982

If only we did delight to do no evil, to forgive rather than retaliate, to bring into God’s light those emotions, attitudes and prejudices in ourselves which lie at the root of destructive conflict, so that we could acknowledge our need for forgiveness and grace. That’s how we would bring justice and peace to the world.

Anne-Marie Zilliacus, 2001

Peace begins in the human heart. Our Buddhist friends talk of “being peace.” Can we learn to speak truth and “be peace”? Can we speak truth and still walk cheerfully over the world answering that of God in everyone? Can we listen to others, without arrogance or pride? Can we love ourselves in healthy ways, so that we can love our neighbors? Fox asked that people live the model we espouse. Through faithful living, seeking God’s love and guidance, we are able to speak our message and still know the humanity of all we encounter. We learn to forgive, and learn to seek forgiveness, by the doing. We learn to reconcile by doing it.

Mary Lord, 2005

The peace testimony is not about hiding conflict, but about engaging it openly, creatively, and with love for the other.

Margery Post Abbott, 2009
Advices & Queries – Peace

We practice love and peace-making within our families, in our meetings, and in the greater Quaker community. This experience will support our testimony of peace as we are involved in the larger world.

Peace is the state in which we are in accord with the Divine, the earth, others, and ourselves. We know that true, lasting peace among us is attainable through unity in the life of the Spirit.

When a conflict is beginning, we take steps to resolve it quickly and reduce the damage it does. When a conflict has ended, we take steps toward forgiveness, reconciliation, and restoration. In this way we help break the cycles of violence.

We work to create the conditions of peace, such as freedom, justice, cooperation, and the right sharing of the world’s resources.

As we work for peace in the world, we search out the seeds of war in ourselves and in our way of life. We refuse to join in actions which lead to destruction and death. We seek ways to cooperate to save life and strengthen the bonds of unity among all people.

- Do we live in the virtue of that life and power that takes away the occasion of all war?
- Do we refrain from taking part in war as inconsistent with the Spirit of Christ? In what ways do we take part in war indirectly?
- What are we doing to remove the causes of war and to bring about the conditions of peace? Where there is hatred, division, or strife, how are we instruments of reconciliation and love?
- Do we recognize that we are capable of both violence and peace? How do we build bridges that lead us to face and resolve conflict?
- How do we communicate to others an understanding of the basis of our peace testimony?
- As we work for peace in the world, how are we nourished by peace within ourselves, our families, and our meetings?
“Be Not Afraid”

“Be not afraid” is a phrase that appears frequently in the Bible and still speaks to us today. When those in power use fear to manipulate and control, causing abuse, violence, and oppression, it can be challenging for us to live and act in accord with Quaker values. Living in a time of fear can corrode our ability to listen and respond to the Spirit.

Early Friends were persecuted for practicing their faith. They showed love and courage in the face of public ridicule, confiscation of property, arrest and imprisonment, and sometimes death. Although Friends today are blessed with the freedom to worship openly, examples of the courageous witness of early Friends are an inspiration for us facing oppressive social and political conditions.

Fear can be a healthy and useful response, for instance when it prompts Friends to pay attention and take precautions for the safety of themselves, their loved ones, and others. Fear is an instinctive reaction that can mean literal survival in some circumstances. Fear can also become problematic.

Fear – and the sense of vulnerability it often brings – can separate us from each other and from God. It can cloud our judgment and diminish our abilities to discern, learn, and grow. As each of us grows in the Spirit, we are called to let go of our fears: of making mistakes; of not being approved of; of needs going unmet; of conflict, illness, loneliness, and diminishment; and of not being perfect (or even good enough). We cannot avoid our fears by attempting to control people to make things turn out the way we want.

Living in the Spirit within a supportive, faithful fellowship gives us courage and guidance to let our lives speak, even when we are afraid, and helps us turn toward each other and toward the Light. When fear threatens our resolve, God’s love comforts and strengthens us. When we trust our Inner Guide, we can walk through our fears and come out in love.
**Quotations**

Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death  
I shall fear no evil, for Thou art with me….

_Psalm 23:4 (King James Version)_

Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid.

_John 14:27_

The first ingredient of life is courage.

_Ham Sok Hon, 1965_

What Jesus was saying is that there is a difference between ordinary prudence and the fear that paralyzes and alienates one from his fellow men. Rufus Jones said about those very words of Jesus, “Christ’s major point in the Sermon on the Mount is to get rid of fears and anxieties.” It might also be said that the substance of His mission as a teacher was to set men free from the slavery of fears.

_Dorothy Hutchinson, 1965_

This is what the story of the death and resurrection of Jesus symbolizes for me: if you are willing to go into and through your fear, even though it feels like death, you will experience, miracle of miracles, life more fully and abundantly than ever.

_Arthur Larrabee, 1998_

We live in times when it is very important to distinguish between fear and courage. Fear is sending the world toward war. Maintaining peace takes courage. Fear drives people apart. It takes courage to come together with respect while recognizing our differences. This is what diversity and community and love are all about.

_Bonnie Tinker, 2002_

It may not be quite accurate to say that “perfect love had cast out my fear.” [1 John 4:18] I still experienced fear, and have again on subsequent occasions. But I learned that I swim in a river of love, that I can orient myself to it, and feel its power. When I do so, I know that I can survive the fear, and go beyond it, to a powerful place of peace. I learned that I cannot simply make this transition just once, and stay in that place of love, for the fear comes
back. So I need to make that journey again and again. I needed disciplines, familiar paths to tread, to re-connect with love again and again, and feel the fears subside. I understand this love as a manifestation of the Spirit, mediated through the ministry of my sisters and brothers, my wife and sons, my friends, and sometimes even strangers.

Bruce Birchard, 2003

When we encounter those times in our lives when the path is lost and the shadows loom, we must give preponderance to the darkness. We can take small steps, one by one, feeling only the empty space immediately before us, breathing in the dark. We can find a little courage, somewhere, in the midst of our discouragement, but we cannot truly anticipate the light.

Yet because of this dark passage, when the light does come at last, we will know that we have been changed. We have walked far enough. We are ready to welcome morning. Whatever work we have to do in the world, we will bring new brightness and clarity to it, new willingness. We will know that we are capable of courage, and capable of encouraging one another.

Kirsten Backstrom, 2006

The problem is that when we follow our fears, we never get clear and our fears confine us in a box made of worry and defensiveness. When we follow where the Light leads, the fears of self and for self drop away and we can act to make love manifest in the world. The Light always requires us to risk loving, and in risking love we find true peace.

Robert Griswold, 2010

Fear is at the heart of many things, and the seeds it plants bear bitter fruits: fear can grow to jealousy, fear can grow to greed, fear can grow to war. Fear also blinds us to key truths: fear keeps us from seeing the fear in the eyes of the Other, and indeed fear keeps us from seeing the Other as human at all. Fear keeps us from seeing the divine in the heart of the Other. There is more than one reason that the first words of the angels are always, “fear not!”

Paul Christiansen, 2014

Advices & Queries – “Be Not Afraid”

Courage is a fundamental act of faith.

As Friends we examine our fears and have the courage to release those that prevent us from growing in the Spirit and following our
Guide. As we continue letting go of our fears and following the motions of love, we are led into a new, more abundant and joy-filled life. Although this life is not always free of pain, it is graced with a courage that will endure any adversity.

We ask those in authority to employ their power to reconcile and unify us, rather than to exploit fear to divide us.

It takes courage to reach out to those who are creating fear and to those who are controlled by fear. We work to restore harmony through peacemaking and reconciliation based in mutual love. Disharmony is a manifestation of fear; it results in separation from God, from ourselves, from our fellow human beings, and from all of creation.

• How does fear influence our lives? Are our decisions based on fear, or do we trust the Spirit’s urging toward love and reconciliation? How do we let go of our fears, trusting the Spirit, so that we can restore peace in our meetings and communities?

• Do we encourage each other through love to act in faithful witness? How do we identify and confront fears that deceive, enslave, and stop us from living faithfully?

• In times of trial and terror how can we open our hearts, return to God’s love, and move forward with courage?

• What would we do, as individuals and as a community, if we were not afraid?

Testimony of Simplicity

A life centered in God will be characterized by simplicity, sincerity, and integrity. Integrity is being all of a piece. Sincerity is being without sham. Simplicity is cutting away everything that is extraneous, so that our outward life fully reflects our inward life.

A simple life need not be cloistered and may even be a busy life. Its activities and expressions are correlated and directed toward the purpose of keeping our communication with God open and unencumbered. Simplicity is a Spirit-led ordering of our lives to this end.
In the past, Quakers could be readily identified by plain dress and plain speech. Today, we have no recipe book for simplicity; all Friends find their own way. Simplicity does mean avoiding self-indulgence, maintaining a spirit of humility, and speaking clearly and directly without exaggeration. It also means keeping the material surroundings of our lives serviceable to necessary ends. A simple life need not be barren and without joy and beauty. Often the most simple lines, words, or moments, when marked by grace, are the most beautiful.

Quotations

My mind through the power of Truth was in a good degree weaned from the desire of outward greatness, and I was learning to be content with real conveniences that were not costly; so that a way of life free from such Entanglements appeared best for me, tho’ the income was small. I had several offers of business that appeared profitable, but saw not my way clear to accept of them, as believing the business proposed would be attended with more outward care & cumber than was required of me to engage in. I saw that a humble man, with the Blessing of the Lord, might live on a little, and that where the heart was set on greatness, success in business did not satisfy the craving; but that commonly with an increase of wealth, the desire for wealth increased. There was a care on my mind so to pass my time, as to things outward, that nothing might hinder me from the most steady attention to the voice of the True Shepherd.

John Woolman, ca. 1744

The concern-oriented life is ordered and organized from within. And we learn to say No as well as Yes by attending to the guidance of inner responsibility. Quaker simplicity needs to be expressed not merely in dress and architecture and the height of tombstones but also in the structure of a relatively simplified and coordinated life-program of social responsibilities. And I am persuaded that concerns introduce that simplification, and along with it that intensification which we need in opposition to the hurried, superficial tendencies of our age.

Life is meant to be lived from a Center, a divine Center — a life of unhurried peace and power. It is simple. It is serene. It takes no time, but it occupies all our time.

Thomas Kelly, 1941
What does it really mean to “live simply”? … Is it really a matter of our material possessions or, rather, a state of mind, heart, and spirit? …

True simplicity should connote not poverty but, rather, a richness of spirit, a joy in living, the nurturing of creativity, sensitivity to the natural world, and love for all its creatures. As an expression of this love, this true simplicity, we must then, too, commit ourselves to building a more equitable world — a world in which this simplicity may thrive and be enjoyed by everyone.

Ann Kriebel, 1984

Plain living is a form of inward simplicity that leads us to listen for the “still, small voice” of God’s claim upon our lives. It is both a spiritual lens and a discipline of holy obedience. This way of living simplifies our lives because when we focus our energies on what we discern by listening within, we are able to release the extraneous activities and possessions that clutter our path.

Catherine Whitmire, 2001

If we can attain it, how does simplicity shape our lives? Needing little, keeping away from extremes, excess, brings another kind of contentment, a simpler wealth. Simplicity is the essence of stillness, an untroubled way that keeps from grasping, hoarding. Simplicity lies at the heart of the Quaker way of life. Keeping to simplicity is to realize that it is the Light within that leads us, restrains us, inspires us. Knowing this Divine Light is within, we are all children of the Light, all equal. Keeping to the contentment of simplicity leads to peace. Following the plain truth leads to integrity. So all the testimonies are reflected in simplicity. Need little. Want less.

Anne-Marie Zilliacus, 2001

It may surprise some of us to hear that the first generation did not have a testimony for simplicity. They came upon a faith which cut to the root of the way they saw life, radically reorienting it. They saw that all they did must flow directly from what they experienced as true, and that if it did not, both the knowing and the doing became false. In order to keep the knowledge clear and the doing true, they stripped away anything which seemed to get in the way. They called those things superfluities, and it is this radical process of stripping for clear-seeing which we now term simplicity.

Frances Irene Taber, 2009
Advices & Queries – Simplicity

Simplicity is one of the fruits of a faithful life centered on a commitment to the Spirit of God.

Friends strive for simplicity in the use of our earnings and property, in our speech, and in our manner of living, choosing that which is clear and useful.

All that leads to fullness of life and aids in the service of Truth is to be accepted with thanksgiving. We each determine by the Light we are given what helps and what hinders our search for inner peace.

- Do we center our lives in the awareness of God so that all things take their rightful place?
- Do we clutter our lives with things and activities? What are the ways out? What helps us avoid commitments beyond our strength and light?
- How does our meeting help us simplify our lives? How do we order our individual lives to nourish our spiritual growth?
- Do we keep to simplicity, moderation, and honesty in our speech, our manner of living, and our daily work?

Testimony of Equality

Every person has the capacity to experience the Inner Light. This common humanity transcends our differences. Equality does not mean having the same ability, economic resources, or social status but rather, treating every person with respect and love.

Equality was one of the earliest of the Quaker testimonies. Even before Quakers espoused pacifism, Quaker soldiers were dismissed from service because they refused to treat their officers as superiors. From the earliest days, men and women equally took on responsibilities for ministry and care of others in their meetings. Early Quakers practiced “plain speech.” They addressed superiors using the familiar “thou” instead of the formal “you” that was considered polite in the seventeenth century. Quakers refused to use honorifics and titles or to doff their hats to those
of a higher class – they offered the same respect and courtesy to everyone. Later, many Quakers worked vigorously to eliminate slavery. More recently, NPYM Friends have recognized the rights of lesbians and gays, and many meetings have taken marriages and commitment ceremonies of same-sex couples under their care. (See Chapter 1, “History,” and Chapter 10, “Marriage and Committed Relationships.”) In 2017 the yearly meeting declared itself an open and affirming religious community, welcoming all genders.

Yet the history of Friends practice of the testimony of equality is not without flaw: early Friends established separate men’s and women’s meetings and many Friends owned slaves and opposed those within the Society who worked for abolition. Some Quaker meetings relegated African Americans to separate benches and placed obstacles in the way of gaining membership.

In light of this history, we ask ourselves whether we are actively living out the testimony of equality in our personal lives, in our meetings, and in the world. We recognize that members of oppressed groups, especially those easily identifiable by their appearance, are subject to prejudice and discrimination. We know that the same is true of poor people and the working class. They face obstacles, both personal and institutional, that others do not, in gaining education or living wage employment. More subtly, they constantly face the unthinking assumptions of others and a lack of sensitivity to their social conditions. We acknowledge that members of the Religious Society of Friends who are white, or from other entitled groups, may benefit from privilege and may exhibit prejudice and discrimination, even unintentionally.

As Friends, we share a vision of a social order based on the testimony of equality – it embraces and seeks to transform all of human society. This vision, and the inner transformation that enables us to see it and live it, enhances our spiritual connectedness and can transcend our differences.
**Quotations**

There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male or female, for all of you are one in Christ Jesus.

*Galatians 3:28*

If a person with gold rings and in fine clothes comes into your assembly, and if a poor person in dirty clothes also comes in, and if you take notice of the one wearing the fine clothes and say, “have a seat here, please,” while to the one who is poor you say, “stand there,” or, “sit at my feet,” have you not made distinctions among your selves and become judges with evil thoughts?

*James 2:2-4*

The Spirit of Grace ... God poureth forth upon Daughters, Servants and Hand-maids, which have received as well as Sons, and are to improve their Talents and measure of the Gift of God, and not to grieve nor quench the holy Spirit, nor walk despitefully against the Spirit of Grace ... whereby we are sealed to the day of Redemption.

*London Women’s Meeting, 1685*

As male and female are made one in Jesus Christ, so women receive an office in the Truth as well as men, and they have a stewardship and must give an account of their stewardship as well as the men.

*Elizabeth Bathurst, 1695*

And as you request to know particularly about Arch St. Meeting, I may say that the experience of years has made me wise in this fact, that there is a bench set apart at that meeting for our people, whether officially appointed or not I cannot say; but this I am free to say, that my Mother and myself were told to sit there, & that a friend sat at each end of the bench to prevent white persons from sitting there.

*Sarah Mapps Douglas, 1837*

Too long have wrongs and oppression existed without an acknowledged wrongdoer and oppressor. It was not until the slaveholder was told ‘Thou art the man’ that a healthy agitation was brought about. Woman is told the fault is in herself, in too willingly submitting to her inferior condition but like the slave, she is pressed down by laws in the making of which she has no voice,
and crushed by customs which have grown out of such laws. She cannot rise therefore, while thus trampled in the dust. The oppressor does not see himself in that light until the oppressed cry for deliverance.

Lucretia Mott, 1852

Love is a reciprocal relationship between independent personalities, each with rights and spheres of interest. So it is with groups – a proper loving relationship between groups must be based on their rights to co-exist and influence matters in their own spheres of interest. I do not see such group existence and group power as inconsistent with a loving relationship, but rather as the proper basis for such a relationship.

Our task then is not to oppose group differences or legitimate group power, i.e. power which does not place one group in a position of dominance or privilege with respect to another, but to welcome such diversity and reciprocity as the basis of creative dialogue in a spirit of love...

In order to be true to this goal, and to our own values as Quakers and Christians, we need to act in love, truth and responsibility, but also with frankness and radical strength of purpose.

A. Barrie Pittock, 1969

How healing to come into the Religious Society of Friends, whose founder saw clearly that the Light of God is not limited to the male half of the human race. Membership and participation have helped me grow toward wholeness, as I have followed my calling into a ministry that embraces all of life. Though I believe deeply in women’s liberation, I cannot put men down or join in consciousness-raising activities that foster hatred of everything masculine. I have loved the men in my life too deeply for that kind of betrayal.

As women gain rights and become whole human beings, men too can grow into wholeness, no longer having to carry the whole burden of responsibility for running the affairs of humankind, but in humility accepting the vast resources, as yet not very much drawn on, and the wisdom of women in solving the colossal problems of the world.

Elizabeth Watson, 1975

Until we as the Religious Society begin to question our assumptions, until we look at the prejudices, often very deeply hidden, within our own Society, how are we going to be able to confront the inequalities within the wider society? We are very good at feeling bad about injustice, we put a lot of energy into sticking-plaster activity (which obviously has to be done) but we are not having any
effect in challenging the causes of inequality and oppression. I do sometimes wonder if this is because we are not able to do this within and among ourselves.

Susan Rooke-Matthews, 1993

Jesus said, “As you have done unto the least... you have done unto me.” We are called to work for the peaceable Kingdom of God on the whole earth, in right sharing with all peoples. However few our numbers, we are called to be the salt that flavours and preserves, to be a light in the darkness of greed and destruction.

We have heard of the disappearing snows of Kilimanjaro and glaciers of Bolivia, from which come life-giving waters. We have heard appeals from peoples of the Arctic, Asia and Pacific. We have heard of forests cut down, seasons disrupted, wildlife dying, of land hunger in Africa, of new diseases, droughts, floods, fires, famine and desperate migrations — this climatic chaos is now worsening. There are wars and rumors of war, job loss, inequality and violence. We fear our neighbors. We waste our children’s heritage.

All of these are driven by our dominant economic systems — by greed not need, by worship of the market, by Mammon and Caesar.

Is this how Jesus showed us to live?

Sixth World Conference of Friends, 2012

Advices & Queries – Equality

We treat every person with respect and love, based on our belief in the fundamental equality of all of humankind.

We examine ourselves as individuals and in our meeting communities to be sure that we are practicing the testimony of equality in reality and not just paying lip service to it.

We cherish those parts of the history of the Religious Society of Friends that show us opposing slavery and refusing to doff our hats to superiors. We also acknowledge that Friends are not perfect in treating all human beings with equal respect and that there is work yet to do, both among Friends and in the world, to achieve the vision of a social order based on the testimony of equality.

• Do we regularly examine ourselves for evidence of privilege and prejudice?
• What are we, as individuals and as a meeting community, doing to overcome the contemporary effects of past and present oppression?

• How do we avoid being drawn into violent reactions against those who are destructive of human dignity? Do we reach out to the violator as well as the violated with courage and love?

• How do we make our meeting open to all, regardless of ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation and identity, or class?

• Is our meeting place physically accessible and welcoming to all?

**Testimony of Stewardship**

The testimony of stewardship is evolving, and new ways of understanding humankind’s role in the community of life are urgently necessary in our time. The word “stewardship” can imply dominion or control, and so many Friends instead speak of a testimony of “earth care.” This *Faith and Practice* uses “stewardship” and defines it more broadly than Friends have in earlier generations. It distinguishes stewardship in the sense of living in harmony with creation from stewardship in the sense of right use of gifts given to us – time, ability, money, and our physical selves. These aspects of stewardship are distinct and yet deeply linked. The natural world is not a “gift given to us for our use.” Our individual or communal talent is such a gift. When we fully understand that humans are only part of the natural world – not divinely appointed masters or managers of it – we are better able to make Spirit-led decisions that reflect our place in it.

We strive for balance, to use what we have wisely and with due care for other creatures, and to live as lightly on the earth as we can. We are answerable to the rest of creation and ultimately to God for how we understand and take our place in the community of life.
Harmony with Creation

The mystery and beauty of the universe reveal their Source. Spiritually and physically nourished by our home, the Earth, we are filled with gratitude and wonder. Centered in divine Love, we are called to recognize and respect the sacredness and interdependence of the whole community of life, as well as the complex balance required to sustain it. Each of us is part of the whole of life. All of life is in each of us. We grieve over what has been lost through humankind’s continuing misuse of divine gifts, leading to extinction of species; pollution of earth, water, and air; and calamitous climate change.

As Friends we are led to live in right relationship to creation, to protect the Earth and all its inhabitants, to educate ourselves, and to witness both personally and as a Quaker community. This state of right relationship will be manifest in lives lived in equality, simplicity, community, integrity, and peace.

We can educate ourselves by learning about the far-reaching spiritual and environmental consequences of our daily activities: our habits and choices of energy usage, housing, travel, reproduction, diet, and consumption. We can witness personally by being “patterns and examples” of environmentally sustainable lifestyles. We can witness publicly by advocating for cultural changes that reflect the principle of harmony with creation. We celebrate the Earth’s bounty which provides for us, our fellow human beings, future generations, and all other living beings.

Quotations

But ask the animals, and they will teach you;  
the birds of the air, and they will tell you;  
Ask the plants of the earth, and they will teach you,  
and the fish of the sea will declare to you.

Job 12: 7-8
The earth is the Lord’s and all that is in it,
the world, and those who live in it;
for he has founded it on the seas,
and established it on the rivers.

Psalm 24:1-2

What wages doth the Lord desire of you for his earth that he giveth to you…
but that you give him the praise and honor, and the thanks, and the glory, and
not that you should spend the creatures upon your lusts, but to do good with
them, you that have much to them that have little, and to honor God with your
substance…leave all creatures behind you as you found them, which God hath
given to serve all nations and all generations.

George Fox, 1678

It would go a great way to caution and direct people in their use of the world,
that they were better studied and knowing in the Creation of it. For how [could
they] find the confidence to abuse it, while they should see the Great Creator
stare them in the Face, in all and every part thereof?

William Penn, 1693

[M]y love of beauty in nature helped very much to strengthen my faith in God.
I felt his presence in my world rather than thought out how he could be there.
When “I” was moved with wonder, awe, and mystery, I was always reaching
out beyond what I saw and touched….

Rufus Jones, 1926

Healing of the Earth is central to all our Quaker concerns…. No peace
without a planet…. No justice without a planet…. Those who care about the
Earth must feel its woundedness as our own…. How can we look our children
and grandchildren in the eye unless we do all we can to give them a future?
They need to know that we care, and that we tried.

Elizabeth Watson, 1991

God calls Friends today … to look into our hearts and examine our relationship
with the rest of Creation, and to recognize that our neighbor includes the entire
Earth community. We, too, are being asked to give up habits and things which
have made our lives seem easier, just as slaves appeared to make life easier for
their owners.

Lisa Gould, 1994
The challenge faced at this time on the planet is not simply a crisis for human beings but for the entire realm of animals and plants, the total biotic community interacting with nonliving forces. The Earth is one ecosystem, one creation. As we become more aware of the abiotic and biotic community of the Earth, a just community includes other species and the Earth’s resources.

The vision of shalom is a vision of wholeness, encompassing the whole of creation. It is a vision of peace and well-being that will be realized only by relationships of justice and compassion. A viable historical future needs the shalom vision to become a historical reality, not a future dream.

Anne Thomas, 1995

We need to commit ourselves to radically changed lives, recognizing the costly implications, yet also knowing the joy, reverence, and deep love of God that inspires us. Spirit-filled lives that see every form of life as an expression of universal love enable us to move forward confidently, in faith and in hope. Yes, hope, in spite of all we know.

Doris Ferm, 2006

In past times God’s Creation restored itself. Now humanity dominates, our growing population consuming more resources than nature can replace. We must change, we must become careful stewards of all life. Earthcare unites traditional Quaker testimonies: peace, equality, simplicity, love, integrity, and justice. …

We dedicate ourselves to let the living waters flow through us — where we live, regionally, and in wider world fellowship. We dedicate ourselves to building the peace that passeth all understanding, to the repair of the world, opening our lives to the Light to guide us in each small step.


Sixth World Conference of Friends, 2012

Advices & Queries – Harmony with Creation

Rejoice in the majesty of nature. Pray that the Presence will lead us to our rightful place in the creation.

We are each part of the intricate web of life; each choice to act or not to act can have profound consequences. We live in such
a complex world that we can do considerable damage without knowing it. Choices that are beneficial in one direction may be harmful in another.

We take care to conserve and protect the whole of life. Both scientific inquiry and spiritual reflection lead us to deeper understanding of the interconnected, constantly changing systems in which we live.

The essence of the Divine Light can be found in our connection to the natural world. Our collective experience of this deep interconnectedness with all nature helps us understand the connection between ecological and cultural diversity, know the Earth as teacher, and value inspiration from a range of faith traditions.

We face the difficult challenge to change our manner of living to come into harmony with creation. As we support each other’s efforts to use no more than our fair share, we guard against waste and resist the temptations of convenience and the inertia of the status quo. We help each other look for ways to counter attitudes of human arrogance, domination, and greed which threaten Earth’s equilibrium.

- In what ways do we seek harmony with Creation? How does science help us live within It respectfully?
- In what ways do we honor all living things? Do we seek the holiness inherent in the order of nature, the wildness of wilderness, and the richness of the world?
- How do our daily habits and choices reflect our respect for the web of life?
- What will the impact of our current choices be on the lives of future generations?
- How do we educate ourselves and others about living in harmony with the earth?
- What can we do to make the community of life whole?
Stewardship of Money and Other Resources

John Woolman’s simple statement in *A Word of Remembrance and Caution to the Rich* (1793) may summarize all considerations of stewardship:

*As Christians, all we possess is the gift of God, and in the distribution of it we act as his stewards; it becomes us therefore to act agreeably to that divine wisdom which he graciously gives to his servants.*

The ways Friends think about and use money and all other resources are linked to our values of integrity, equality, social justice, and peace. We are responsible for how we acquire and use our financial resources, not as ends in themselves but as gifts temporarily entrusted to us. We seek to use them with humility and care and to share them with others.

We are stewards of many other gifts beyond money and material possessions – for example, we are also accountable to Truth for how we use our time, strength, and inherent talents and abilities. We hold these gifts in trust, and take care to use them in good order and in the Spirit of Love. Decisions we make about the food we eat, the clothing we wear, the ways we communicate, and the ways we travel from place to place have consequences for our physical and spiritual lives and for the environment. Using all our gifts with care brings us closer to the Center.

The community of early Friends was knit together by their recognition of a common good to which all contributed. In the crucible of religious oppression, early Friends were moved to support one another with all of their God-given gifts. Meetings offered material support to care for community members experiencing hardship. This ministry continues today: most monthly meetings have a committee for pastoral care that coordinates the community’s skills, talents, and funds to alleviate suffering in the meeting.

Many Friends have labored in the Spirit in regard to accumulated wealth and aspired to apply their financial resources to breathe life into Friends testimonies. In nineteenth-century England, Elizabeth Fry was led to bring her talents and the funds of family
and friends to her concern for prison conditions, thus pioneering Quaker involvement in prison reform. In the early twentieth century, Swiss Friend Pierre Ceresole was moved to apply his talent and wealth to create a service organization that served as a model for the Peace Corps in the US. Friends continue to work against exploitation and for fair and equitable wages, healthy working conditions, and honest employment practices for all. These and other examples show Friends commitment to improving the human condition with all available gifts.

Early Quakers lived in a culture dominated by hereditary rank and privilege. Modern Quakers live in cultures dominated by economic and social class divisions. We are often uncertain or uneasy about the role money plays in our lives. Wealth, or a perceived lack of it, has an effect on nearly every outward aspect of our lives: housing, clothing, transportation, education, health, recreation, etc. We know that too much time and attention to money can preempt more Spirit-led choices in our lives. We also know that money well-used can make needed changes possible. We are clear about the spiritual dangers of a culture built on unbridled capitalism and obsessed with economic status. We are aware that unequal distribution of wealth is one of the seeds of war.

**Quotations**

*Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal; but store up for yourself treasures in heaven…. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.*

*No one can serve two masters; for a slave will either hate the one and love the other or be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth.*

*Matthew 6: 19-21, 24*

*Ye have no time but this present time, therefore prize your time, for your soul’s sake.*

*George Fox, 1652*

*…That all Friends that have callings and trades, do labour in the thing that is good, in faithfulness and uprightness, and keep to their yea and nay in all their communications; and that all who are indebted to the world, endeavor*
to discharge the same, that nothing they may owe to any man but love one to another.

Epistle from the Elders at Balby, 1656

Every degree of luxury of what kind so ever, and every demand for money inconsistent with divine order, hath some connection with unnecessary labor…. To labor too hard or cause others to do so, that we may live conformable to customs which Christ our Redeemer contradicted by his example in the days of his flesh, and which are contrary to divine order, is to manure a soil for propagating an evil seed in the earth.

May we look upon our treasure, the furniture of our houses, and our garments, and try whether the seeds of war have nourishment in these our possessions.

John Woolman, 1763

Poverty does not mean scorn for goods and property. It means the strict limitation of goods that are for personal use. It means the opposite of the reckless abuse and misuse of property that leaves our country spotted with the graveyards of broken and abandoned machinery. It means a horror of war, first because it ruins human life and health and the beauty of the earth, but second because it destroys goods that could be used to relieve misery and hardship and to give joy.

Mildred Binns Young, 1956

[F]inancial stewardship in harmony with the testimonies is as much a part of our spiritual life and journey as prayer and meditation.

Our efforts to live simply and reject superfluous consumption of material goods should not be equated with a superficial belief that money is inherently “bad” or at best a necessary evil that should be ignored. By ignoring finances and not exercising thoughtful stewardship, we risk allowing money to have more control over our lives rather than less. …

What does our spending, especially our contributions to our monthly and yearly meetings, Friends organizations, or other charities, say about what is important to us?

Connie Brooks, 2009

For me, tithing is about a lot more than money. It is about faith, trust, and community. By giving ten percent of what I make, I have to have faith that God will provide what I need and that I will be able to survive on less than my entire paycheck. I have to trust that the people in my meeting will be good
stewards of the money I give. Giving that much also means that I am invested in what the community does, which makes me more likely to attend business meeting and care about how the community spends its money.

Ashley Wilcox, 2010

Advices & Queries –
Stewardship of Money and Other Resources

We seek a sound relationship to money and other resources, making decisions that reflect our testimonies of integrity, simplicity, equality, peace, and care for creation.

Our household and meeting spending plans are evidence of what is important in our lives.

We pay a fair wage to our employees and offer comparable pay for comparable work.

We refrain from hazardous speculation or participation in business matters that may be ethically suspect. We seek to invest our money and time in ventures that are planned to benefit the social or environmental good as well as to provide a fair rate of return.

Obsession with the things we have is a sickness. So also are envy and helplessness when we feel we haven’t enough. Whatever our state of economic affairs, gratitude for what we have helps to prevent worries over losing it or resentment of others who live differently.

We accept our gifts and recognize with profound gratitude any opportunities to share them generously. We embrace and uphold Friends commitment to improving the human condition with all available gifts.

As Friends, we examine our decisions about money and other assets, and look in them for the seeds of war, injustice, and environmental damage.

- How do we use our time, talents, and material possessions to reflect that they are gifts from God?
• As individuals and as a meeting community, how do we show that we are stewards and not just owners of the property and resources in our care?

• How does the Spirit guide us in our relationship to money? How do our choices reflect the working of Truth and Love in our lives and in the world?

• How do we avoid judging others, and ourselves, by worldly criteria of wealth or status? How do we answer to that of God in those who have less than we do? in those who have more than we do?

• How do we use the gifts we are given in ways that build community and bring us closer to the Source and Center?

• What is our “fair share”? How do our social and economic choices help or harm our vulnerable neighbors – human and non-human? Can we identify “the seeds of war” in our choices?

**Stewardship of the Self**

Taking care of our physical, mental, and emotional health, as we are able, is a form of stewardship. Living the most balanced and healthy life we can brings us wholeness and promotes our spiritual well-being. How we use and treat our bodies can help us to find a new self in partnership with the Creator. Just as we seek timely medical help for our physical bodies, we attend appropriately to our mental and emotional health needs.

Our testimonies of simplicity, integrity, and stewardship encourage us to choose ways of living that rest and strengthen the body, and that refresh and enrich the mind and spirit. We choose recreations in keeping with our values around the right use of money. We consider how we use the time and energy that have been given to us. We make considered choices about the food we eat. We also think about the effects that our choices have on the welfare of others and of the Earth as a whole as well as on our own lives.

Some activities can become obsessions, leading to lives inconsistent with integrity and simplicity and creating barriers between individuals and their families and communities. Although we are
now less concerned about mild forms of gambling such as raffles and door prizes, traditionally Friends have opposed all forms of gambling as distractions from our connection to God that could also lead to family ruin. As Friends we recognize that the incautious use of alcohol and drugs can be a spiritual danger as well as a threat to our physical, emotional, and social selves. Any activity taken to an extreme can divide us from God.

**Physical Activity as a Spiritual Discipline.** Many forms of recreation or physical activity can be used as spiritual disciplines. Intentional immersion in re-creative activity can enable us, as George Fox advised, to be still awhile from our own thoughts and to be stayed in the principle of God. We can find focus in rhythmic physical activity or in the regular activities of preparing food, washing dishes, or caring for each other. Changes in our physical ability need not shut us off from the opportunities to experience the Spirit through recreation. Our attitude matters more than proficiency or the nature of the activity performed.

Along the way to singleness of focus, the activities of play and rhythmic exertion offer pleasure. Social relationships in a class, play group, or team can ease the tasks of preparation and warm-up. Playing in a group is a way to follow Jesus’ instruction to become like children, in order to enter the kingdom of Heaven (see Matthew 18:3).

**Quotations**

Therefore be still awhile from your own thoughts, searching, seeking, desires, and imaginations, and be stayed in the principle of God in you, that it may raise your mind up to God, and stay it upon God….

George Fox, 1658

True leisureliness is a beautiful thing and may not lightly be given away. Indeed, it is one of the outstanding and most wonderful features of the life of Christ that, with all his work in preaching and healing and planning for the Kingdom, he leaves behind this sense of leisure, of time in which to pray and meditate, to stand and stare at the cornfields and fishing boats, and to listen to the confidences of neighbours and passers-by….

Most of us need from time to time the experience of something spacious or space-making when Time ceases to be the enemy, goad-in-hand, and becomes
our friend. To read good literature, gaze on natural beauty, to follow cultivated pursuits until our spirits are refreshed and expanded, will not unfit us for the up and doing of life, whether of personal or church affairs. Rather it will help us separate the essential from the unessential, to know where we are really needed and get a sense of proportion. We shall find ourselves giving the effect of leisure even in the midst of a full and busy life. People do not pour their joys or sorrows into the ears of those with an eye on the clock.

Caroline Graveson, 1937

Meeting has given me more balance in living. Over time, the urge to rescue others has lessened as I increasingly brought their troubles, as well as my own, to Meeting and silently asked the Meeting to hold these people in the light. This new way of rescuing works so much better. It has resulted in an increased sensitivity to the feelings of others and a higher capacity to listen without attempting to “fix” the situation or to reduce the person from her/his difficulties.

The increased balance allowed me to see that difficulties can be opportunities for an individual to reach new developmental milestones, to grow by solving the current crisis. It also helped me see that rescuing harms the people involved more often than it “saves” anyone.

Margaret Sanders, 1996

Family recreation should promote restoration, solidarity, and spiritual well-being; it should bring balance into life and contribute to wholeness of personality. Such recreation includes reading aloud, gardening, music and arts and crafts as well as games and sports. All such activities develop fellowship within the family. Both competitive and non-competitive games can teach lessons of fairness, sportsmanship, and self-esteem. Recreational activities should stress cooperation and inclusiveness, and should resist the materialism of our culture.

Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, 2007

Our bodies have so much to teach us. When we listen, they are offering us a constant commentary on our thoughts and actions. …[T]he body has a mind of its own. It is not just the obedient servant of the mind. Too often we treat the sacred vessel of our lives like a support system for the head.

Jaya Karsemeyer, 2010
**Advices & Queries – Stewardship of the Self**

Friends can sometimes be too serious! Playing together joyfully strengthens family and community life.

We are mindful of the beneficial connections among physical, mental, and spiritual well-being. We also recognize that neither physical nor mental illness implies any spiritual weakness.

Healthful activity includes games, sports, and other physical exercise; gardening and the study and enjoyment of nature; travel; books; fellowship with friends and family; and arts and handicrafts which bring creative self-expression and appreciation of beauty.

Recreations in which we are participants rather than spectators can be particularly beneficial.

- Do we choose recreations which strengthen our physical, mental, and spiritual lives and avoid those which may prove harmful to ourselves and others and to the world around us?
- How do we make time in our lives for healthy play?
- How do our food choices reflect our values as Friends?
- Do we recognize all our own addictions and compulsive behaviors? How do our relationships with the Spirit and with our meeting communities help us deal with them?
Kathy Cope
San Juan Worship Group
The monthly meeting is the fundamental unit of the Religious Society of Friends. It consists of a group of Friends who meet together at regular intervals to wait upon God in meeting for worship and meeting for business. Some groups use the traditional term “monthly meeting,” so named because meetings for business typically occur once a month, although other groups name themselves “Friends meetings” to be more generally descriptive.

Within our meetings, Friends are “joined with God and with each other” and in this there is order, unity, and power. It is upon this concept of a meeting that the good order of Friends is based. Through the corporate life of a monthly meeting, Friends order their lives in relation to God and, through that relationship, to the most profound realities of life: birth and death, marriage and family, community of spirit, concern for humanity and all of God’s creation.

The monthly meeting is the core of the community of Friends. It receives and records new members; terminates membership when necessary; provides spiritual and, when necessary and possible, material aid to those in its fellowship; counsels with members in troubled circumstances; oversees marriages; gives comfort at the time of death; collects and dispenses funds for its maintenance and work; owns or rents a place where worship is regularly held; witnesses to Friends testimonies; relates itself to its quarterly and yearly meetings and to other bodies of Friends and to other
organizations with common concerns; and carries on any work or assumes any function consistent with the faith of Friends and not specifically the work of some other Friends body. Good records are kept of all its proceedings.

The degree of organization of a monthly meeting depends upon its circumstances. Organization does not exist for its own sake but to provide what is needed for the meeting’s orderly and effective operation, while allowing each person freedom, participation, and responsibility. Simple in its early stages, a meeting’s organization evolves with its needs. Experience shows that Friends leave in place the organizational structures which prove useful and either change or lay down those structures which no longer serve a vital function.

See Chapters 7 and 8, “Quarterly Meetings” and “The Yearly Meeting,” for the monthly meeting’s relationship to these larger bodies.

**Background**

*I was moved to recommend the setting up of monthly meetings throughout the nation. And the Lord opened to me what I must do and how the men’s and women’s monthly and quarterly meetings should be ordered and established in this and in other nations….*

*George Fox, 1667*

George Fox preached the good news that “Christ has come to teach his people himself” and that the love and power of God are available to all people without the help of priests, ministers, or sacraments. Early Friends testified that they were drawn together by shared experiences of Christ, the Inward Teacher, and that they knew that Christ is present to all and in all; further, that each person perceives the Light individually and in such measure as God wills; yet, there is but one Truth. The Light operating through each individual results in a gathered fellowship, the mystical union of individuals with each other. In this welding of many persons into one corporate body, many single openings and insights
are forged into a more complete and unified understanding of God’s will.

In the first years of preaching by Fox and his followers, now known as the Valiant Sixty, organization was informal and used for communication and coordination. This organization depended chiefly upon the personal influence and incessant work of the early leaders. As the Society grew, there emerged a need for organized nurture of groups, for communication among groups, for dealing with internal problems, for a united response to government persecution, and for prevention of embarrassing public incidents. Fox recognized that a method had to be found for Friends as a body to make needed decisions, rather than having that responsibility assumed by a few outstanding leaders.

Being aware of the hypocrisy and worldliness of the religious hierarchies and institutions of his day, Fox was led to proclaim the “true Gospel Order,” of which Christ was clearly the head and in which all Friends participated fully according to the measure of Light they had received. Some meetings which were essentially monthly meetings were established in the north of England as early as 1653, but the systematic establishment of monthly meetings and quarterly meetings came in 1667–71 as Fox traveled extensively throughout England, Scotland, and Ireland.

Fox perceived that, in the male-dominated society of his time, women could take their rightful place in the Religious Society of Friends only when they were freed from the control and interference of men. Initially, men and women met separately to conduct business. When separate business meetings became unnecessary, they were laid down in favor of combined meetings.

The basic framework of the Society as it exists today is based on the system that Fox organized. It provides a channel for the Kingdom of God to be established on earth by providing both for the care and nourishment of God’s people and also for the furtherance of God’s will in the world at large. At various times one or the other aspect has been foremost, but both have always been present and are necessary for healthy meetings and for a healthy Society as a whole.
Meeting for Worship

The meeting for worship lies at the heart of the monthly meeting and the larger Religious Society of Friends. Worship together is central and fundamental to Friends. Worship is based on direct communion with God. The unprogrammed meeting for worship is a distinctive Quaker practice which has existed from the beginning of the Society and in today’s practice remains grounded in expectant listening for Divine inspiration and guidance.

Meetings for worship are held at established times, usually once a week; specially called meetings for worship are arranged by the monthly meeting on the occasion of marriages, memorial services, or other events.

See “Expectant Worship, Vocal Ministry” in Chapter 3, “Friends Spiritual Disciplines,” about the spiritual nature and experience of meeting for worship.

Meeting for Business

The meeting for business is a meeting for worship during which Friends attend to our corporate business. It takes place in the same expectant waiting for the guidance of the Spirit as does any meeting for worship. Friends conduct business in the trust that those assembled, when guided by the Spirit, can reach unity on decisions, directions, and concerns. Making business decisions becomes an experience of worship.

Care must be taken to distinguish between the monthly meeting, the fundamental body of the Religious Society of Friends, and the monthly meeting which is the occasion for conducting business.


*It is a weighty thing to speak in large meetings for business. First, except our minds are rightly prepared, and we clearly understand the case we speak to, instead of forwarding, we hinder the business and make more labour for those on whom the burden of work is laid.*
If selfish views or a partial spirit have any room in our minds, we are unfit for the Lord’s work. If we have a clear prospect of the business and proper weight on our minds to speak, it behooves us to avoid useless apologies and repetitions. Where people are gathered from far, and adjourning a meeting of business attended with great difficulty, it behooves all to be cautious how they detain a meeting, especially when they have sat six or seven hours and have a great distance to ride home.

In three hundred minutes are five hours, and he that improperly detains three hundred people one minute, besides other evils that attend it, does an injury like that of imprisoning one man five hours without cause.

John Woolman, 1758

Friends Method of Reaching Decisions

Friends conduct business together in the faith that there is one Divine Spirit which is accessible to all people, and that when Friends wait upon, heed, and follow the Light of Truth within them, that Spirit will lead to unity. No matter the size of the group, this faith is the foundation for any decision.

Quaker decision making is based on our religious faith. Friends come to a meeting for business expecting to be led toward correct action. Unity is always possible because the same Light of Truth shines in some measure in every human heart. In practical terms this means that such meetings are held in a context of worship and that those present repeatedly and consciously seek divine guidance.

It is important that every meeting for discernment by a meeting, committee, or other decision-making body begin with a period of worship rather than with “a few moments of silence,” so that the spirit of worship will pervade the transaction of business. Friends return to silent worship as needed during the course of the meeting. To emphasize this interdependence, some Friends speak of “meeting for worship for business.” Only as Friends are aware that we are functioning in the Divine Presence does the Quaker method work.
The commitment to search for unity depends upon mutual trust, implies a willingness to labor and to submit to the leadings of the Spirit, and grows as members become better acquainted with one another. All members and attenders are encouraged to attend and take part in meetings for business.

**Bringing Items of Business before the Meeting.** A matter requiring meeting action may be brought before the meeting for business by the clerk, a committee, or any member. In the latter two instances, the clerk is informed in advance so that the matter can be included on the agenda. A written copy of the proposal is given to the clerk before or at the time of presentation to the meeting. Care in preparing the agenda and the clerk’s judgment of the relative urgency and importance of matters can help greatly to facilitate the meeting’s business.

**Good Order of Friends during Meeting for Business.**

The Quaker method for reaching decisions involves searching for the right corporate decisions and arriving at the “sense of the meeting” or unity. Friends seek divine guidance, are patient with each other, and are concerned for the good of the meeting as a whole. Friends allow adequate time for deliberate and prayerful consideration of the matter in hand. Friends attend meeting for business open to the leadings of the Spirit.

During the meeting, Friends speak briefly and to the point, express their own views, avoid refuting statements made by others, and credit purity of motive to all. Before speaking, Friends seek recognition from the clerk. It can be helpful to the meeting for Friends to speak directly to the clerk, and the clerk may request this. Friends hesitate to speak more than once on an issue. When someone has already stated a position satisfactorily, Friends need offer only a word or two expressing agreement.

**Role of the Clerk.** The clerk gathers and articulates the sense of the meeting, and is reluctant to state an opinion. If a view is being overlooked, the clerk may pose questions to draw attention to it. If the clerk has strong views on an issue, the assistant clerk or another Friend serves as clerk during its consideration. The grace of humor often helps to relax tensions so that new Light comes to the meeting. A period of worshipful silence can also help.
**Sense of the Meeting.** When those present become aware of a gathered insight or an inner sense of rightness, recognizing that a decision has been reached, the clerk will then attempt to articulate the sense of the meeting by proposing a minute. On weighty matters, once the sense of the meeting has been reached, it is promptly recorded as a minute and read back to the meeting for approval. The clerk and recording clerk may need time to compose a minute together and will ask those assembled to uphold them as they do so. Anyone may offer revisions to the proposed minute, and the meeting may approve, modify, or reject it. Friends have not completed the action until they have approved the minute. The group seeks divine guidance together as a faith community; therefore, only those present can experience the movement of the Spirit within the group.

**Unity.** Friends strive to achieve unity in the Spirit, rather than uniformity, unanimity, or consensus. Friends achieve unity because of our conviction that there is such a thing as corporate guidance where a group, meeting in the expectation of divine leading, may be given a greater insight than any single person. The unity which Friends seek and hope to capture in a recorded minute is God’s will in relation to the matter under consideration. Assent to a minute, however, does not imply uniformity of judgment. Rather it is a recognition that the minute records what the group feels is right at a given time.

There may be Friends who would wish the meeting to move forward more assertively and others who seek moderation. Each might have wished the meeting to take a different course from that agreed upon, but nevertheless give assent to the sense of the meeting. The search for truth and unity is sometimes a long and difficult one, requiring much love, tolerance, and patience. Preparation and prayer prior to a meeting can clear away small issues and make the path to reaching unity easier. Quaker process will not work if members have not listened deeply to each other and to the Inward Teacher, or if they have been too impatient to allow unity to emerge. Nevertheless, Quakers have used this method with a large degree of success for more than three centuries.
**Threshing Sessions.** Friends do not avoid issues which may be difficult or controversial. It is better for the meeting to allow full opportunity for differences to be aired and faced. In dealing with such issues, or those of a complex nature entailing information with which some Friends may be unfamiliar, it is often helpful to hold one or more preliminary “threshing sessions” in which no decision is made, but through which the chaff can be separated from the grain of Truth. Such sessions can clear the way for later action at meeting for business. Full notice of a threshing session is given and special efforts are made to see that Friends of all shades of opinion can and will be present. To the extent that Friends of a given view are absent, the usefulness of such a meeting will be impaired. If factual material needs to be presented, persons knowledgeable in the area are asked to present such material and be available to answer questions.

It is best if the threshing session is moderated by a Friend not identified with any particular opinion on the matter. The moderator makes it clear at the start that the meeting not only expects but welcomes expressions of the widest differences. Friends are urged not to hold back whatever troubles them about the issues at hand. Hesitancy to share a strong conviction, because it may offend someone, reflects a lack of trust. The moderator’s job is to draw out the reticent and limit the time taken by those too quick to speak. It is useful to ask someone to take notes of the session for later reference. The threshing session may discern a new way forward. Some meetings schedule threshing sessions on a regular basis.

**Serious Differences of Opinion.** When there are serious differences of opinion and some remain strongly convinced of the validity of their point of view, it is frequently possible to find unity by recourse to a period of silent worship and prayer. The effect of this quiet waiting is often powerful, and a way to solve the problem may appear. Such a way transcends compromise; it is the discovery at a deeper level of what all really desire. If there continue to be Friends whose convictions make it impossible for them to unite with the meeting, the decision may be postponed to a later time or the matter may be referred to a small committee.
Such a committee includes Friends of diverse views and is charged with revising the proposal in light of the objections and with bringing recommendations to a later meeting. If the matter is urgent, the committee may withdraw to return before the meeting closes or may be given the power to act.

In the process of reaching a decision, the clerk and the meeting quite properly take into consideration that some Friends have more wisdom and experience than others on a given issue. Some members have specialized knowledge and training in certain areas and therefore their conviction may carry greater weight when the matter at hand is related to their expertise; the meeting should not easily disregard the opposition of such Friends. The meeting must be on guard against always accepting words of weighty Friends as final, however, and must also be wary of accepting traditional patterns only because they are comfortably familiar. New and younger attenders often provide fresh and powerful insights. However, an individual who frequently expresses unyielding opinions in a disruptive manner may need to be approached by an elder. In the event that counsel is ineffective, the situation may be brought to the Pastoral Care Committee.\(^1\)

When a committee brings a recommendation for consideration, the meeting keeps in mind that the recommendation is the result of the concentrated attention of a small group and resists temptation to repeat the committee’s work. The committee, on its part, avoids

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1. “The Oversight Committee” is a traditional Quaker name for the committee that organizes memorials, handles requests for membership or marriage under the care of the meeting, and coordinates help and comfort for Friends in need. In many meetings this function is combined with care for the community’s spiritual life, hence the common name “Ministry & Oversight Committee” – the name used by NPYM and its quarterly meetings. However, “oversight” has connotations of slavery for many Friends, and they may use some other name in their meetings, such as Ministry & Counsel for a combined committee. Each Friends group names its committees in its own way. Reflecting the concern about “oversight,” this Faith and Practice uses “Pastoral Care Committee” for the committee in a local Friends group that has responsibility for memorials, memberships, etc.
being so attached to its recommendation that it forgets that new insights can develop as the meeting considers the matter.

Sometimes after careful examination and patient listening to the meeting, a Friend may express misgivings about an action the body seems ready to approve. The clerk must be open both to the meeting’s readiness to act and to any Friend’s sense of discomfort with that action. The group may need to remain undecided for a while longer, holding the possibility that a previously unrealized way may open. Recording a minute of exercise to describe an issue and the various ways Friends see it can help a meeting to understand it at a later time, perhaps in the virtue of new Light.

A Friend with a deep concern about an action may also express willingness to “stand aside” from the proposed action, recognizing that the meeting has reached unity. The act of “standing aside” is an expression of community with the meeting as it seeks the divine will in the matter. It is an acknowledgment that the action being taken is how the meeting is led at this time. What we seek is not unanimity, but unity in the Spirit which is able to encompass discomfort with the approved action. The clerk may then propose a minute expressing the sense of the meeting. Once a concern is heard, it is no longer carried only by the individual who raised it. It now rests in the community and the name of an individual standing aside is not recorded. The concern may be recorded in the minutes and is part of the sense of the meeting.

On rare occasions, after spiritual searching to ascertain that personal feelings are not blocking divine guidance, a Friend may be unable either to unite with or to stand aside from the decision the body is ready to make. The person with the conviction presents their concerns, gives the reasons, and asks the group not to proceed. The meeting must discern whether that conviction has enough spiritual weight to require waiting for further light. The phrase “standing in the way” has been used to describe this request not to proceed, but an individual never has the power to prevent the meeting from acting. The meeting, however, may feel that the concern has enough weight to hold the matter over for further discernment or to abandon the action entirely. If the meeting, after prolonged laboring, is convinced that it is following
divine guidance, it may set aside the objections and proceed. It may include reference to the objections in the minute recording the action. The growth of Truth among the members in the course of time will confirm the action or lead the meeting to a sounder decision.

**State of Society Report**

The State of Society report (sometimes called State of the Society report or State of the Meeting report) is prepared once a year by each meeting in time to be forwarded to the spring session of its quarterly meeting. In contrast to the informal reports of activities given to quarterly meetings at other times of the year, the State of Society report is a self-examination by the meeting and its members of their spiritual strengths and weaknesses and of efforts to foster growth in their spiritual life. Reports may cover the full range of interests and concerns but emphasize those that indicate the spiritual health of the meeting. After revision and acceptance by the meeting, the report is given to the quarterly meeting Ministry & Oversight Committee, and may be read at quarterly meeting. The yearly meeting Ministry & Oversight Committee also reviews the reports.

**Meeting Officers and Committees**

Organizational models vary widely throughout North Pacific Yearly Meeting. Groups use various names for offices and committees, and combine functions and responsibilities differently.

Organization evolves as times and needs change; each monthly meeting discerns the officers and committees currently necessary to carry out its concerns and business. A small meeting may be able to function with only a clerk and a treasurer, and with the meeting acting as a committee of the whole. Any but the smallest meetings will likely sense a need for a committee responsible for ministry and pastoral care, whose clerk is someone other than the clerk of the meeting. The religious education of children who come under its care is also an early concern of the meeting, as is
help for young people seeking to be recognized as conscientious objectors to military service. The meeting also considers practical concerns, such as the need for insurance or legal incorporation, especially if it acquires property.

Meetings typically select officers and committees from nominations presented by a Nominating Committee (see below). The meeting is concerned not only with appointing the most qualified person to each job, but also with developing and using the talents and resources of all members and attenders. It is good practice for meetings to maintain job descriptions for officers and committees, outlining tasks and responsibilities and suggesting terms of service, so that all can understand what is expected in each role in the meeting structure.

Suggestions for Handling Challenges in Leadership

When an officer or committee member (or a whole committee) seems unable to work effectively, the meeting can respond in a variety of ways. Possible actions include:

- The clerk of the meeting or clerk of that particular committee speaking informally with the officer or committee member to ask what’s happening;
- Eldering in loving concern – deep listening and spiritual laboring together with the person;
- Waiting until the person’s term ends;
- Appointing an assistant clerk or additional committee members to help fulfill the obligations;
- Offering the possibility of a Clearness Committee on the question of continuing service;
- Asking the quarterly or yearly meeting’s Ministry & Oversight Committee for advice or for help in eldering;
- Asking for the person’s resignation.
In asking people to assume various responsibilities, the meeting recognizes that each individual has unique gifts which may not be equally suitable for all positions in the meeting. The meeting does not ask members and attenders to take on inappropriate responsibilities out of a sense of equality or “taking turns.” The meeting trusts its officers and committees so as to spare the entire body from many small decisions. However, ministry in word and act, responsibility for the good order and material needs of the meeting, visitation, faithfulness in testimonies – all these things, in the measure of Light that is given, fall upon each person in the meeting.

Leadership is the role of facilitating and listening closely for unity and the sense of the corporate body, rather than pursuing an individual agenda. Leadership can be demanding. Some people hesitate to ask for help when struggling and some don’t realize they need it. Friends may approach a leader and ask what would be helpful, such as a Support or Anchor Committee. Friends stay tender to one another and work in the spirit of mutual understanding and faith. All of us are part of the meeting, and we support it when we prayerfully uphold the clerk, officers, committee clerks, and committee members.

An officer or committee member wishing to resign from service sends a statement in writing to the committee clerk, the clerk of the Nominating Committee, or the clerk of the meeting as a whole. Whichever clerk receives the resignation statement informs the other two promptly, and the resignation goes before meeting for business. Only the body which made the appointment can withdraw it, so the resignation is not final until the meeting accepts it. If led to do so, the clerk of the meeting or clerk of Nominating Committee meets in loving concern with the officer or committee member to discuss the circumstances of the resignation.

**Officers**

Monthly meetings appoint individuals to serve as officers and to carry out specific functions, such as presiding over meetings, keeping records, maintaining stewardship of property and funds, and nurturing the community. Names for the offices vary. It is
important that responsibility for all necessary functions be assumed by willing and capable individuals. The officers are appointed for defined terms of service using the nomination process described below under “Nominating Committee.” An effective officer is one who, while assuming a particular responsibility, is committed to the leading of the Spirit in discerning what needs to be done and who seeks to engage others in the meeting.

**Clerk.** The clerk is called to attend to the guidance of the Spirit in all aspects of the life of the meeting. The clerk is also called upon to speak on behalf of the meeting to the broader public. In an emergency, the clerk is the central point of contact for the meeting and the public. Because of the clerk’s weight of responsibility, especially in a larger meeting, they may be encouraged to have a Support Committee. The clerk’s most visible role is facilitating the business of the meeting. The clerk performs the role well by seeing to it that all pertinent business and concerns are presented to the monthly meeting clearly and in good order.

The following suggestions are meant especially for the clerk of a monthly meeting; they apply generally to the clerk of any Friends body and may be useful guidelines for clerks of committees. Some groups have co-clerks who share the tasks.

The clerk is a member of the meeting who has the confidence of its membership and who, in turn, has deep respect and warm regard for its individual members and attenders. The clerk is spiritually sensitive so that the meeting for business may be helped to discover the will of the Spirit. Familiarity with *Faith and Practice* is essential and awareness of other Quaker literature is important. The clerk is able to comprehend readily, evaluate rightly, and state clearly and concisely an item of business or a concern which comes to the meeting. In order to gather the sense of the meeting at the proper time, the clerk listens receptively to what is said.

The clerk faithfully attends meeting for worship and keeps close to the work of committees, especially the Worship & Ministry and Pastoral Care Committees. The clerk sees that correspondence that comes to the meeting is properly handled.
The clerk presides at all meetings for business; if prevented from attending, arrangements are made for a substitute. The clerk prepares an agenda prior to the meeting and encourages committee clerks and others to provide ahead of time such reports, concerns, and other proposals as ought to be placed on the agenda. The clerk’s judgment of the relative urgency and importance of matters and their best place on the agenda can help greatly to facilitate the meeting’s business. The clerk requests that appropriate background material accompany each issue presented.

A chief art of the clerk is to set the pace of the meeting so that its business may be accomplished without either undue delay or undue hurry. A sense of proportion and a sense of humor are helpful.

The clerk may call a special meeting for business to consider a specific item. The clerk provides advance notice of such a “called meeting,” which considers no other business.

After action has been taken, the clerk communicates with the persons involved and makes sure that they understand their responsibility in carrying out the actions.

The clerk signs all official papers and minutes. It is good practice for both the clerk and another designated officer to sign any legal documents. The clerk, or assistant clerk, prepares and endorses certificates of transfer, minutes for sojourning members, traveling minutes, and letters of introduction, as well as endorsing minutes or letters of visiting Friends.

The clerk also has the responsibility to coordinate the activities of the meeting with those of the quarterly and yearly meetings of which it is a part. This includes seeing that the meeting is represented where necessary, that reports are written and sent to the proper officers, that business and concerns are sent at the proper time to the quarterly or yearly meeting, and that items received from those meetings go to the proper persons and committees.

**Assistant Clerk.** An assistant to the clerk, who may be called an assistant clerk, helps the clerk during meetings for business,
in whatever ways are mutually agreeable. In a larger meeting, another listening presence can aid the clerk during meeting for business. The assistant acts for the clerk when the latter is unable to serve. In some meetings this clerk also serves as an archivist.

**Recording Clerk.** The recording clerk records the minutes of the meeting for business and is responsible for compiling all the reports and documents that pertain to the minutes.

**Recording Minutes.** The recording clerk writes minutes mindful that they preserve the history of the meeting. While the method for taking minutes varies somewhat by monthly meeting, there are some basic, standard practices. Friends reading the minutes later find it helpful if they include: the title of the minutes with the full correct name of the meeting and the day, month, and year of the business meeting session; the time meeting commenced; the number of those present; the name of the clerk and the recording clerk; and any query read. The recording clerk also includes any unique details of the day. For individuals with the same names, the recording clerk finds ways to distinguish them in the minutes. The recording clerk records the names of individuals only when they are making a report or fulfilling a duty, not when they are speaking to issues being considered. The recording clerk uses proper titles for organizations referred to, and their constituent parts, such as “Pacific Northwest Quarterly Meeting.” The recording clerk accurately notes marriages, births, and deaths of those associated with the meeting. These records become part of the meeting’s archives.

The minutes of the monthly meeting for business include information and reports, as well as records of official action that a meeting takes. Minutes aim for completeness and succinctness. When the monthly meeting comes to a decision on an issue, it is recorded in the minutes. When the clerk states the sense of the meeting on that issue and the meeting agrees that the statement is correct, the recording clerk may ask that it be repeated so that it can be recorded exactly as approved by the body. After recording the decision in a minute, the recording clerk may then immediately reread the
minute to the meeting for approval. Also, for important issues, it is useful for the recording clerk to include succinct details that convey the difficulties involved, including a brief history of the matter. Some meetings use the process of approving minutes item by item during the meeting for business for all parts of the minutes. Others approve only important minutes immediately. Others publish minutes in their newsletters or by email, and seek approval of the minutes at the next occurring meeting for business. If necessary, at the close of meeting for business, the recording clerk may confer with those giving reports or making recommendations, to ensure that the minutes correctly reflect what was said.

Memorial minutes are those reflecting on the life of a recently deceased Friend. They are usually prepared in advance of the monthly meeting for business and read during the meeting. The recording clerk attaches memorial minutes to the minutes for the meeting for business. Further discussion of memorial minutes is found in Chapter 11, “Death and Memorials.”

**Treasurer, Assistant Treasurer.** The treasurer collects contributions and payments due to the meeting, makes deposits and pays bills in a timely manner, balances the checking and savings accounts, and disburses funds as the meeting directs. The treasurer keeps the account books of the meeting, tracks expenditures against the budget and keeps records of payments made, and prepares periodic reports according to the meeting’s needs. They record donations and prepare end-of-year contribution statements. In consultation with the Finance Committee, the treasurer prepares the annual budget and investigates and recommends possible investments for the meeting. An accountant or bookkeeper may be engaged to assist them. The accounts should be audited at regular intervals. An informal audit is acceptable when performed in a transparent manner.

An assistant treasurer to work with and help the treasurer may be appointed when there is need, such as in larger meetings.

…That collections be timely made for the poor … as they are moved, according to order, for relief of prisoners, and other necessary uses, as need shall require:
and all moneys so collected, an account thereof to be taken; from which every need may be supplied, as made known by the overseers in every meeting: that no private ends may be answered, but all brought to the light, that the gospel be not slandered.

_Epistle from the Elders at Balby, 1656_

**Archivist.** While the minutes and records of committee clerks and officers are their responsibility to preserve, the archivist (sometimes called recorder) takes care of other important records of the meeting. The archivist preserves typewritten or electronically printed copies on archival paper, and, to the extent possible, electronic copies of all minutes and documents from meeting for business. Attention is paid to keeping electronic records in accessible formats. The archivist may have the care of young people’s formal statements of their conscientious objection to military service. The archivist also preserves important correspondence and legal papers, such as deeds, conveyances, and trusts, in a permanent repository protected from fire and loss.

For preservation of membership records, see the Pastoral Care Committee, below.

...That a record be kept in every meeting of the births of children of such who are members of that meeting, and of the burials of the dead who die in the Lord as they depart out of the body....

_Epistle from the Elders at Balby, 1656_

**Committees**

Monthly meetings often use committees to further their business. Meetings have found that much of their work can be done more appropriately in small groups than in the body of the meeting or by individuals. A committee can also be a “school of the Spirit” where Friends nurture one another and offer mutual accountability and support. Faithful service on a committee can be a spiritual discipline; see “Participation in the Life of the Meeting” in Chapter 3, “Friends Spiritual Disciplines.”

Each meeting decides which committees are necessary to carry out its business and concerns, and how they are named.
There is no obligation to create any committee, although most monthly meetings find a Committee on Ministry & Counsel and a Nominating Committee essential. Other standing committees often found in meetings are those on religious education, finance, peace and social concerns, outreach to the wider community, property, and fellowship. Ad hoc committees are sometimes useful for a particular project or concern. When a committee no longer serves its purpose, it is laid down.

Members of committees are carefully selected according to their abilities and concerns. Appointments to a committee are for a definite term of service and often arranged so that terms overlap, to ensure continuity. Meetings customarily appoint experienced and capable members of the Religious Society of Friends to the committees on pastoral care and ministry in order to assign those responsibilities to persons of spiritual depth who are familiar with Friends faith and ways of organizing and conducting meeting work. Some meetings, particularly smaller meetings, choose also to invest seasoned attenders with those responsibilities while others limit service on Worship & Ministry and Pastoral Care Committees to members of the Society.

Committees conduct business in the same manner as a monthly meeting, waiting on the Spirit to find direction in their operation and unity in their decisions. Clerks of committees or their designees attend meeting for business regularly in order to assure smooth coordination between the committees and the meeting. It is important that committees keep minutes of their meetings and report to the monthly meeting regularly. All action of committees in the name of the meeting is subject to approval by the monthly meeting for business. In bringing a matter to the meeting for business, it is useful for the committee to supply a concise summary of background material and a clear statement of the kind of response wanted from the meeting. In the meeting for business, Friends consider carefully the recommendations of a committee, and at the same time do not re-do the work of the committee. Mutual trust between the meeting and a committee and faith in the power of God over all will help achieve the proper balance.
Another Quaker custom is that when a committee or smaller group reports back to the larger group about its work or recommendation, that committee is trusted to have done their work well. We trust their study and insight of the issue. … The work of the larger group is to hear the details or recommendations, and make decisions regarding the … broad implications of the decision, and to decide whether or not to go forward.

Rebecca Henderson, 2013

Worship & Ministry and Pastoral Care Committees

The important and closely related functions of these two committees are central to the life of the meeting. These committees have a special responsibility to encourage and develop the care of members for each other and for the life of the meeting (although all members share in the responsibility for such care). The primary focus of the Worship & Ministry Committee is the spiritual life of the meeting, while the Pastoral Care Committee is mainly concerned with care for members, including their relationship to the meeting.

The Pastoral Care Committee has sometimes been called an “Oversight Committee,” a name less often used today because “oversight” recalls the history of slavery. This committee may also be called the “Care & Counsel Committee.” This Faith and Practice uses “Pastoral Care Committee” for the sake of clarity when referring to the committee concerned with memberships, marriages, memorial meetings, and similar matters.

Some meetings, especially smaller meetings, have one committee with combined functions. This committee is sometimes called the “Ministry & Oversight Committee;” some meetings call it the “Ministry & Counsel Committee,” “Spiritual Nurture Committee,” or “Community Spiritual Life Committee.” Each Friends group names its own committees as it finds best.

Joint Responsibilities. In a meeting which has both a Worship & Ministry Committee and a Pastoral Care Committee, these committees share certain responsibilities. The monthly meeting sometimes asks these committees to share in the nurture of worship groups and preparative meetings under its care, although a separate committee is sometimes appointed for this purpose.
Although these committees usually meet separately, it is important that they keep in touch with each other. A joint retreat, for a day or a weekend, can be of benefit for the life of the committees and that of the meeting.

**Worship & Ministry.** The function of the Committee on Worship & Ministry is to foster and strengthen the spiritual life of the meeting by nurturing the meeting for worship and the spiritual growth of individuals in the meeting. Though this is a challenging assignment and one which is difficult to express in specifics, it is central to the life of the meeting. The first responsibility of members of this committee is to deepen their own spiritual lives and their preparation for worship.

This committee includes members of varied ages and gifts who are faithful in worship and sensitive to the life of the Spirit. It includes both Friends inclined to offer vocal ministry in meeting for worship and those less inclined to do so. It also includes Friends of good judgment who have a gift for encouraging sensitivity to divine prompting.

The committee meets regularly to consider the meeting for worship and to keep it under constant review, prayer, and care. Members of this committee strengthen meeting for worship by attending regularly, setting an example, demonstrating promptness and reverence in their approach to the meeting for worship, and adhering faithfully to the guidance of the Spirit. Through self-examination, prayer, and mutual counsel, committee members help one another and the meeting to grow in worship and ministry. An ever-renewed dedication to worship is almost always the best way to minister to difficulties in a meeting for worship.

This committee is responsible for the care of meeting for worship, including, for example, welcoming of visitors, encouraging promptness at meeting, protecting the sense of worship, and closing meeting for worship.

The committee may occasionally hold meetings for all members and attenders to share their experience and search for insight concerning the meeting for worship and the meeting for business. When appropriate, the committee may propose to the meeting
specially called meetings for worship. See, for instance, “Memorial Meetings” in Chapter 11, “Death and Memorials.”

Committee members are mindful that there are differences in background, fluency of expression, and power of interpretation among those who may be led to speak. The committee gives sympathetic encouragement to those who show promising gifts and gives loving and tender guidance to those whose vocal ministry may seem too frequent, too lengthy, not Spirit-led, or otherwise of concern to the meeting. The committee opens the way for those who are timid and inexperienced in vocal ministry and encourages all Friends in the ministry of listening. Committee members cultivate in themselves the search for right guidance.

The committee seeks to deepen the spiritual lives of individuals in the meeting and encourages varied gifts for ministry and service, whether through vocal ministry, teaching, deep listening, and counsel, or through artistic, interpersonal, and practical ways of expression. The committee encourages private worship, prayer, meditation, and devotional reading to promote growth in the spiritual life and prepare each individual for the corporate worship of the meeting. The committee may also obtain and circulate appropriate literature and arrange for retreats, study groups, and spiritual sharing groups.

**Pastoral Care.** The Pastoral Care Committee (sometimes called the Oversight Committee or Care & Counsel Committee) is responsible for the care of the meeting’s members. In providing pastoral care, the committee is concerned with the more outward aspects of building a fellowship in which all members find acceptance, loving care, and opportunity for service. Then all may grow in grace and, liberated from preoccupation with self, help to serve humanity creatively.

Membership on this committee calls for dedication, tact, confidentiality, and discretion, and is entered into prayerfully, with an alert willingness to be of service. The meeting selects members to serve on this committee who are representative of the varied make-up of the meeting and who are persons of experience, sympathy, and good judgment. The committee meets regularly to carry on its work in a spirit of dedication and love.
The committee knows the members and attenders of meeting and maintains contact with them in a spirit of affectionate interest and loving care. To foster the knowledge of one another in things both temporal and eternal, the committee encourages members and attenders to visit in each other’s homes and promotes activities that will deepen fellowship within the meeting. The committee also encourages Friends to attend the Annual Session of the yearly meeting and similar gatherings, advising on possible financial assistance for this purpose.

It is useful for the committee to keep in contact with nonresident members to give them news of the meeting and its activities and to let them know that the meeting is interested in their welfare. The committee keeps in touch with inactive members, hoping to rekindle their interest in the meeting. If an individual fails to attend meeting for worship for a prolonged period, the committee may encourage that person to withdraw from meeting (see Chapter 9, “Membership”). When appropriate, the meeting encourages distant members to transfer membership to a nearby meeting.

The committee also faithfully keeps an accurate record of the membership as provided for on the form recommended by the yearly meeting. Such records cover vital statistics pertaining to the member and the member’s immediate family. It is important that changes relating to membership – such as births, deaths, transfers, releases, or marriages – be promptly recorded. Each spring the committee or an officer of the meeting completes a questionnaire from the yearly meeting to give statistical and other information regarding the monthly meeting. A copy of this report is part of the permanent records of the monthly meeting.

The Pastoral Care Committee considers and recommends action upon requests for membership and transfer and withdrawal of membership (see Chapter 9). It is concerned for the nurture of the religious life of children and young people, their participation in the meeting, and their preparation for membership. When young people near adulthood, the Pastoral Care Committee makes sure they understand that membership in the Religious Society of Friends is an individual conscious choice, not an automatic, age-dependent transition. The committee may discuss this with
young people informally or may offer the clearness process to them to discern whether they are led to request membership. The committee also helps to make newcomers and attenders welcome and gives them information concerning Quakers and Quakerism. When it seems right, the committee encourages those who may be holding back to consider applying for membership.

The committee assists those contemplating and entering into marriage under the care of the meeting (see Chapter 10, “Marriage and Committed Relationships”). It gives care and aid in needed arrangements at the time of death (see Chapter 11, “Death and Memorials”). The committee seeks to be of help in clearing up misunderstandings and reconciling differences that may come about in the meeting. Committee members are concerned with the welfare of any who are ill, incapacitated, troubled, or in material need. The committee is tender to the challenges of aging and long-term illness, helps to discern the appropriate limits of medical intervention, and offers a Care Committee as need arises. The Pastoral Care Committee sees that those in need are visited, counseled with, and assisted. The meeting provides this committee with a fund to be used at its discretion.

Particular responsibility for spiritual counseling and care lies with the Pastoral Care Committee, which should choose counselors fitted for particular needs from among themselves or from among other qualified persons in the meeting. Qualifications of a good counselor include approachability, warmth, sympathy, spiritual insight without prejudice, capacity to listen without judging, and ability to keep confidences.

In dealing with particular needs, the committee remembers the value of simply listening. To listen helpfully and creatively involves faith in the person and in God, a desire to understand, patience, and avoidance of giving advice. The committee is sensitive to those who may not be receptive to counseling, or who hesitate to seek help. The committee usually assigns one or two Friends to address a given situation. These Friends honor confidentiality, although they may rely on the Pastoral Care Committee as a whole for additional help. The assigned Friends suggest new ways of looking at the problem and possible solutions, but decisions must be left
to the person involved. The assigned Friends encourage growth, independence, and self-reliance while providing emotional support for those making hard decisions.

A problem may be too serious for the Pastoral Care Committee to handle alone, in which case a professional referral is made. Members of the committee make themselves familiar with assistance available in the wider community, including clinics, family and social services, therapists, physicians, and psychiatrists. The committee may call upon others in the meeting to be of assistance when professional help is required. Practical assistance such as Friends offer in other times of stress, illness, or sorrow may be appropriate. Standing by, listening, and helping to plan can also be of great help in a critical time.

**Challenges in Pastoral Care**

The Pastoral Care Committee is a confidential place for considering the needs and characteristics of individuals in a more complete way than would be comfortable with the meeting as a whole. Many Friends struggle at times with their own personal problems. Friends ordinarily want to extend themselves to help others. A meeting can get lost in the issues someone might bring. At the same time the meeting needs to attend to the safety of adults and children and the meeting community as a whole.

**Safety of Children and Youth.** Friends need to be aware that we are just as susceptible as any other group to those who would take advantage of our children and teenagers. Situations of trust can provide openings for abuse. We are responsible for ensuring the safety of children in our communities. Meetings educate themselves regarding indicators, prevention, and handling of incidents of abuse. All Friends groups exercise common-sense precautions in monitoring activities that include adult teachers or caregivers and children.¹

¹ NPYM’s Youth Safety Policy may serve as a reference or model: http://npym.org/?q=content/npym-youth-safety-policy. Multnomah Monthly Meeting also has an extensive child and youth safety policy; see “resources” on their website: https://www.quakercloud.org/cloud/multnomah-friends-meeting.
Conflict within the Meeting. Friends may find themselves in sharp disagreement about particular attitudes and actions. Such disagreement is not to be deplored; it may help to clarify issues and contribute to a deeper unity in time. When difficulties arise, shared, prayerful, and determined efforts to seek Guidance by those involved can help to gain a better understanding. The Pastoral Care Committee may assist with this process or may labor individually with a Friend of unbearable behavior. Support by experienced Friends from quarterly or yearly meeting or other sources may help a meeting to grapple with serious conflict. Mediation can also be sought to strengthen a monthly meeting in its capacity to lovingly and effectively resolve uncomfortable differences. Working faithfully through controversy is central to the health of a Friends community.

Behavioral Disorders. A meeting’s members and attenders (or their families) may have varying degrees of behavioral disorders, including mental illness and dementia. Meetings try to be supportive, although it is not always clear how to be so meaningfully. Friends continue to be tolerant and accepting to the extent possible. But it should be emphasized that disruptive behavior during meeting for worship cannot be accepted. The Worship & Ministry and Pastoral Care Committees respond appropriately to stop behavior that disrupts meeting for worship or threatens the fabric of the meeting community.

In some cases, it may be helpful to designate a Friend to sit in meeting for worship with the person showing behavioral disorder; in other cases a designated Friend may invite the person to leave meeting together to talk elsewhere. In the experience of one meeting, a mentally ill person severely and consistently disrupted meeting for worship. A Clearness Committee process led to a separate, regularly scheduled meeting for worship which included that person and did not disrupt the worship of others. It is important to remember that meetings cannot provide therapy, nor can they ignore such things as civil protection orders.

Violent Offenders. Individuals with a history of sexual offense or other violent crimes may seek to attend meeting. They may be given a chance to come to terms with their past with the help of
Conflict in Meetings

A difficult issue may cause prolonged conflict within a meeting. Silent worship, our most central practice, is the most vulnerable to disruption. Examples of other issues that can spark conflict are:

- The content of religious education programs for children;
- Use of funds, e.g., spending, saving, investing;
- The meeting space itself, e.g., renting, owning, renovating;
- Changes in organizational structure, e.g., a worship group becoming a preparative meeting, or a monthly meeting reverting to a worship group.

Conflict can take on different faces in meetings of different sizes. In large meetings a disturbance may be overlooked because few are aware of it or it is unclear which committee will respond to it. In medium-sized meetings, members overburdened with other meeting demands may find it hard to give due time and energy to resolving conflicts. In small meetings or worship groups, conflict can be particularly disruptive because there is no “neutral party” and everyone is involved in some way.

In any meeting, unresolved conflict may cause people to leave and may threaten the survival of the group itself.

Every meeting, but especially a small meeting, is advised to discern when to ask for outside help. Meetings wisely assess resources available to address a conflict. This process may reveal that it is best to invite a Friend experienced in Quaker dispute resolution from the quarterly or yearly meeting, or outside NPYM, to help the group find its way forward.

Even after the issue is resolved, disturbed relationships may remain within the group. The Pastoral Care Committee can facilitate healing dialogue with individuals who are especially estranged. Following up with a called “meeting for worship for healing” when the conflict ends may yield both forgiveness and unity.
the meeting. But the extent to which a meeting can be of help is very limited. A meeting cannot function as a personal therapist. One meeting appointed a Clearness Committee for a convicted sex offender and held several threshing sessions on all the concerns that arose within the group. This process led to a special, regularly scheduled meeting for worship off-site in a home with no children.

There are other important and practical considerations; it is essential for the meeting to identify sexual offenders promptly, so that it can maintain appropriate monitoring for the safety of all children and adults. The meeting must be sensitive to the needs of adults in the meeting who might have been abused. Meetings and worship groups have to consider what accommodations they can make with the resources they have available.

*How we deal with trauma within our meetings is an indicator of how skillfully and consistently we are living our Quaker testimonies.*

*Bill Ames, 2011*

**Nominating Committee**

The meeting depends upon the Nominating Committee to find the most appropriate persons to fulfill meeting responsibilities and to use to best advantage the capabilities of meeting members and attenders. The committee, a small group of sensitive, tactful, and dedicated Friends, works to discern the meeting’s needs, in both the immediate and long term, and to nurture the growth of new leaders.

The Nominating Committee is representative of the meeting and its members serve overlapping terms. In some meetings a small ad hoc committee is created, often at a meeting for business, to nominate members of the Nominating Committee. These nominations are acted on directly by the monthly meeting. This selection process is used to ensure that the Nominating Committee does not perpetuate itself.

Members of the Nominating Committee are familiar with the function and structure of the meeting and with the good order of Friends. They are aware of the interests, talents, proven experience, latent gifts, and leadership potential of meeting
participants. The committee must begin its work well in advance of the date when its nominations for new officers, committees, and committee clerks are presented to the monthly meeting. After the committee presents its slate, the meeting postpones action upon it for a month, during which time Friends consider the nominations prayerfully and may seek clarification or suggest changes to the Nominating Committee.

The Nominating Committee is available throughout the year to nominate persons to fill vacancies which may occur or new positions which the meeting may establish. This committee is usually responsible for maintaining written job descriptions of the offices and committees to be filled. In some meetings, the Nominating Committee’s sole task is discerning how to match Friends’ gifts with available positions; in other meetings, the committee has the broader charge of care for the spiritual health and functioning of the various committees, and responsibility to intervene when a committee seems to be struggling.

The Nominating Committee best serves the meeting by keeping the following suggestions in mind:

1. In approaching candidates, the committee members make clear that the meeting, not the committee, is responsible for the ultimate appointment.

2. The approach is not made casually. The Nominating Committee and the person approached for nomination need to fully understand the duties involved in the position. The committee gives a written job description to the prospective nominee.

3. Not all Friends are equally qualified for a particular responsibility, so the committee avoids “taking turns” or rewarding long service in making nominations.

4. The committee consults the clerk of a committee about members proposed for that committee. When two persons are to work together closely they should both be consulted about the proposed arrangement.

5. The Nominating Committee recommends a clerk for each standing committee.
6. When the work might pose challenges for a nominee, the Nominating Committee offers to help arrange support and guidance from an individual or a Support Committee.

7. The Nominating Committee considers the gifts and talents of new and young members and attenders.

8. The Nominating Committee provides information about workshops and other training available for clerks, treasurers, and committee members.

9. The committee stays aware of individual Friends who are carrying heavy responsibilities for the meeting; it understands that it is unwise for one or two people to hold too much responsibility.

10. When there are persistent difficulties in filling offices or committees, the Nominating Committee makes the meeting aware.

Religious Education Committee

The committee adopts curricula, activities, and projects that reflect Quaker faith and practice for both adults and children. It helps children feel welcome and integrated into the meeting community. Care for young people is an opportunity for the whole meeting, not just a task of one committee. The meeting can provide recognition of transitions such as high-school graduation; it can nurture the spiritual gifts and spiritual contributions of young people, and encourage participation in meeting for worship. A large meeting may have separate committees for children’s religious education and adult programming. See “Religious Education and Study” in Chapter 3, “Friends Spiritual Disciplines.”

Clearness and Other Care Committees

Meetings form various kinds of ad hoc committees to assist members and attenders. Different meetings use different names – a “Clearness Committee” in one case may be a “Support Committee” or “Anchor Committee” in another. No matter what the committee is called, meetings take good care to establish any such committee mindfully, state its charge clearly, and name a clerk to convene its meetings and guide its process. Typically the
Pastoral Care Committee appoints the committee in consultation with the person or group needing clearness, support, or care.

Such a committee may also meet without the focus person or group present, to seek Light for its work. The committee may ask:

- What are our appropriate behavioral boundaries? Are we keeping to them?
- Are we helping or are we hindering, for example by fostering dependency?
- Are we allowing the focus person or group to do their own work, or are we being too directive?
- Are we staying within our responsibility and charge?
- Have we gone beyond our ability? (That is, is it time to recommend professional help?)

**Clearness Committees.** Clearness Committees are ad hoc committees appointed by the Pastoral Care Committee. Their original and continuing use has been for those requesting membership in the Religious Society of Friends and for those contemplating marriage. Over the years, the scope of Clearness Committees has widened to address personal problems and decision making.

When an individual, family, or other group is facing a particularly difficult situation, they may request a Clearness Committee. The Pastoral Care Committee appoints the committee and names its clerk in consultation with the person or group concerned. Situations in which clearness is sought may include changes in a marriage relationship such as separation or divorce; interpersonal conflicts within the meeting; stands on public issues; a new job; a required move to a distant area; a concern for personal witness; travel in the ministry; and other personal decisions. The Clearness Committee and the person or group meet together in worship to seek divine Guidance.

The process begins with the person or group asking for the committee to help hear what God may be asking of them in a particular area of life. The committee usually consists of two to four trusted individuals (but not necessarily close friends) willing to
listen. The Clearness Committee’s clerk convenes the committee and keeps it focused. Another member may take notes.

The committee gathers in silent worship. The person or group speaks out of the silence concerning the question weighing on them. Listeners offer gentle open-ended questions to clarify the matter; the person or group responds from the heart. The committee’s inquiries invite the focus person or group to deeply engage and discern their own truth, rather than offering advice or judgment in the guise of questions. All present are committed to attend to the movement of the Spirit, recognizing that this is a time for the person or group to find their own way in accord with the Light, not an opportunity for others to share stories about how they solved similar problems. The listeners reflect back what they have been hearing. Further meetings are arranged if desired. In all things the committee remains aware that the process is confidential.

**Support Committees, Anchor Committees.** A Support or Anchor Committee is an ad hoc committee acting as elders for a Friend who is filling a responsible position within the meeting or the Society. The clerk of a meeting, a hospital chaplain, a prison visitor, or a Friend with a leading in peace, social justice, or environmental action – all can benefit from a gentle, strong listening presence to help them stay faithful, grounded, and accountable in their ministry. The Friend may choose the committee name that best describes the type of assistance they need. The Pastoral Care Committee or Worship & Ministry Committee appoints the Support or Anchor Committee (usually two to five people) and names its clerk in consultation with the Friend concerned. The Support or Anchor Committee exists for the duration of the Friend’s work.

**Care Committees.** A Care Committee is an ad hoc committee that usually consists of two or three people who walk alongside a Friend during major life transitions, long-term illness, or incapacity. The Pastoral Care Committee appoints the committee and names its clerk in consultation with the Friend concerned. The Care Committee responds to the person in need of assistance by arranging for food, prayers, visits, transportation, or other support
that can be provided by volunteers. It may make available counsel, information, and support in planning for life transitions. The Care Committee reports regularly to the Pastoral Care Committee and is laid down when the Friend’s situation is resolved.

**Friends in Ministry**

…”That care be taken for the families and goods of such as are called forth into the ministry, or who are imprisoned for the truth’s sake….”

_Epistle from the Elders at Balby, 1656_

“Friends in Ministry” includes Friends with leadings to travel among, write for, and speak to other Friends, as well as Friends whose lives speak in a specific outward witness – for example, visiting prisoners, working among the mentally ill, addressing racism, or serving at food banks or homeless shelters. In our time, “Friends in Ministry” is expanding among unprogrammed Friends to include, for example, Friends in professions with an explicit pastoral or ministry component, such as chaplains and spiritual directors.

Vocal ministry during meeting for worship is described in “Expectant Worship, Vocal Ministry” in Chapter 3, “Friends Spiritual Disciplines.”

**Released Friends with a Concern.** Friends endeavor to serve God through their daily lives. However, in some Friends there arises a leading to some specific task. The leading is felt as an imperative claim – it cannot be denied even when the individual experiences deep personal reluctance. This is what Friends call a “concern.” It is also possible for a concern to arise spontaneously in a meeting in response to a particular need or opportunity. From early days the Religious Society of Friends has greatly valued those leadings of the Spirit which result in individual and corporate concerns. However, concerns vary in merit, depending on the validity of the inspiration and the care with which they are considered and carried out. The concerns of even well-known Friends have not always been of equal significance. Some concerns are meant for an individual, others for a wider group. Friends pursue a concern
publicly only after they have clearness for themselves and the concern has received the corporate support of their meeting. A person with a concern should have patience and humility in seeking support for it.

The appropriate place for a concern to be first considered and tested as a true leading of the Spirit is within the monthly meeting, the basic unit of the Society. Before bringing a concern to the meeting for business, an individual Friend considers it prayerfully, to be sure that it is rightly motivated and of more than personal or passing importance. The Friend seasons the concern through consultation with qualified Friends, a standing committee of the meeting, such as the Peace & Social Concerns Committee or the Worship & Ministry Committee, or a specially requested Clearness Committee. When the seasoning process is complete, the concern comes to the meeting for business in a clear, concise, written statement of its purpose, including the actions proposed and the support needed from the meeting. Until the meeting determines that it will support the concern, Friends avoid statements implying that the meeting has given its support.

Unhurried consideration of the concern by the meeting is important. Consideration may extend over more than one monthly meeting for business. The meeting may unite with and support a Friend to carry out a concern personally – for example, to travel in the ministry, to witness to Friends principles in a given situation, or to do other religiously motivated service.

The process of releasing a Friend from meeting to act on a concern involves careful consideration both of merits and methods as well as the qualifications and situation of the Friend to be released. Motivation, character, and family and financial situation need to be considered. A meeting’s support for a released Friend could include any of the following:

- Release from obligations such as holding meeting offices and serving on committees;
- Appointment of a Support or Anchor Committee to offer advice, encouragement, accountability, and a place to test ideas and leadings;
• Material help as needed;
• Provision of a “traveling minute” outlining the nature of the Friend’s concern and stating the meeting’s endorsement (see below).

The released Friend’s Support Committee reports regularly to the meeting on the progress of the ministry. The Support Committee or the Pastoral Care Committee reviews the concern periodically to see if the help of the meeting should be altered or discontinued.

Sometimes a meeting may find itself so fully in sympathy with the concern that it is laid upon the group as a whole and is carried out by the meeting. If a concern has meaning for more than this monthly meeting, it may be shared directly with other monthly meetings. It may also be forwarded to the quarterly meeting or to a standing committee of North Pacific Yearly Meeting. (See “Bringing Concerns before the Yearly Meeting,” in Chapter 8.)

If a meeting fails to unite with a member’s concern, the member generally reconsiders it very carefully. Occasionally, an individual who is strongly convinced that the corporate life of the meeting and of the Society will be enriched if it can grow and unite with a particular concern may bring that concern to the meeting repeatedly over an extended period. Many of the Quaker testimonies have evolved because of the patient persistence of a valiant Friend who has perceived the Light with extraordinary clarity. Such persistence has helped some meetings and the Society come to unite with an insight which they could not at first accept. If the meeting still remains unable to unite with the concern, it may be because the Friend is “running ahead of their Guide” or because the concern does not arise from a genuine spiritual leading.

**Recorded Ministers.** Monthly meetings within NPYM do not record ministers. Meetings do support and encourage the many Friends in NPYM who exercise clear spiritual gifts and whose lives speak in a variety of ministries.

**Traveling Minutes.** When a member proposes to travel under the weight of a concern to be shared with other Friends, the matter is first considered by the Pastoral Care Committee. Upon
recommendation by that committee, the monthly meeting may grant the Friend a traveling minute for that particular concern. When a meeting grants a traveling minute, it takes care that, as far as possible, the service of the released Friend is not hindered for lack of funds or other resources.

If the visit will go beyond the yearly meeting, the minute should be forwarded to the presiding clerk for yearly meeting endorsement. Before the yearly meeting endorses the minute, it clarifies that the traveling Friend is aware of and sensitive to differences in theology and practice among the Friends to be visited.

Traveling minutes are submitted to and are customarily endorsed by the clerk or other officer of meetings visited by traveling Friends. The traveler returns the minute to the issuing meeting within a reasonable time after the visitation has been completed. Friends also report to other meetings which have supported the concern.

**Letters of Introduction.** Fellowship and the spiritual life of the Religious Society of Friends have long been nourished by visitation outside a member’s own meeting. When a member has occasion to travel and wishes to be in touch with other members of the Society, the monthly meeting clerk may write a letter of introduction. The letter will certify the person’s membership (or affiliation, for a faithful attender who is not a member), state something about the person’s participation in the life of the meeting, and convey greetings to Friends who will be visited. The letter is usually presented by the traveler to meetings or other Friends visited, who may choose to write a return greeting on the letter which is presented to the issuing meeting upon return.

Friends who are traveling and wish to visit Friends in other meetings may receive valuable guidance through Friends World Committee for Consultation, Section of the Americas.
Chapter 6

New Gatherings of Friends

North Pacific Yearly Meeting seeks to foster occasions for worship after the manner of Friends, and in particular to encourage the development of new gatherings, including informal or home meetings, worship groups, preparative meetings, and monthly meetings.

Informal Meetings – Sowing the Seeds

Wherever seekers gather, there may be a spark for a new meeting. To this end, the yearly meeting encourages the formation of discussion groups, book groups, non-violent social action groups, meditation groups, and other informal gatherings, as places where the desire to worship may form. The yearly meeting also encourages home meetings – regularly-scheduled meetings for worship that take place in the homes of those who already belong to a monthly meeting, often when the meetinghouse is distant from a group of worshippers. Informal groups arise most commonly when the monthly meeting encompasses a broad geographic area or is very large.

These gatherings may result in questions about how to start a worship group, and in the seeking of answers from Quaker websites, literature, and meetings. Members of monthly meetings may visit or belong to such groups and thus be ready sources of information about Quaker worship.
Worship Groups

A worship group is a gathering of people that meets regularly for worship after the manner of Friends and is led to unite with Quaker principles and practices. A worship group may organize independently, but usually comes under the care of a monthly meeting. The group may first need to contact and get information, advice, or other support from established Friends groups, including NPYM’s Outreach & Visitation Committee. North Pacific Yearly Meeting has helpful information on how to form a worship group (see Bibliography); regional or quarterly meetings may also be good sources of information. The group is encouraged to ask one or two members of the Ministry & Oversight Committee of the quarterly meeting, or of a monthly meeting, to visit and help them with the discernment process.

Monthly meetings are encouraged to be alert to groups of remote individuals who are seeking to worship as Quakers and provide assistance according to the needs of the groups. If requested, a monthly meeting may establish a committee to help seekers develop a structure and practice for worship. The monthly meeting may provide helpful books and pamphlets, speakers, and the presence of Friends at the group’s worship. The monthly meeting actively discerns the level of ongoing support it can provide.

When a worship group comes under its care, the monthly meeting informs the quarterly and yearly meetings and designates a committee or other form of support for it. The committee usually includes a member of the monthly meeting’s Pastoral Care Committee. The committee is available to give help and guidance to the worship group. The committee meets with the worship group as often as necessary to discern what the group’s spiritual and practical needs are and how the monthly meeting can best help the group. In situations where the worship group is geographically remote, the committee and the worship group work to find creative ways of increasing connection and community — for example, by finding mutually agreed-upon

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1. “The Oversight Committee” is a traditional Quaker name for the committee that organizes memorials, handles requests for membership
meeting places, offering weekend gatherings, establishing travel funding, or seeking visitation and support from the yearly and quarterly meeting or other Quaker organizations.

A worship group may be led to change from one sponsoring monthly meeting to another. A monthly meeting may be unable to continue supporting a worship group. In consultation with the quarterly meeting, another monthly meeting may be found to assume support of the worship group.

A worship group usually names a person to serve as the convener and correspondent of the group. Monthly and regional meetings and other Friends groups or organizations address their communications to this correspondent, who is responsible for sharing these with the entire group. When the worship group chooses a new correspondent, that new person informs these other Quaker organizations.

There is no single path of development for worship groups. Worship groups may decide that meeting for worship is their only activity, and it is acceptable to continue in this fashion for an indefinite time. If there is a sponsoring monthly meeting, it does not encourage the worship group to develop committees and other meeting structures until the group is ready to do so. It may be sufficient initially to simply establish an official relationship with the Religious Society of Friends and provide an avenue for membership, which comes only through a monthly meeting. However, some worship groups are large and well-structured from the beginning and can undertake activities such as shared meals; or marriage under the care of the meeting, and coordinates help and comfort for Friends in need. In many meetings this function is combined with care for the community’s spiritual life, hence the common name “Ministry & Oversight Committee” —the name used by NPYM and its quarterly meetings. However, “oversight” has connotations of slavery for many Friends, and they may use some other name in their meetings, such as Ministry & Counsel for a combined committee. Each Friends’ group names its committees in its own way. Reflecting the concern about “oversight,” this Faith and Practice uses “Pastoral Care Committee” for the committee in a local Friends group that has responsibility for memorials, memberships, etc.
reading, study, and discussion groups; service projects; religious education; public witness; or worship-sharing groups.

A worship group need organize only to the degree that is right for it at the current time. It is important to attend to whatever level of organization is needed to nurture the interests and concerns of its participants, including children. It also provides ways to connect with other Friends groups which can enrich the life of the worship group.

A worship group is limited in particular ways: it may not receive members, take marriages or committed relationships under its care, or otherwise act formally as an established meeting. Such actions must be carried out through the sponsoring monthly meeting. The sponsoring monthly meeting is responsible for the yearly and quarterly meeting assessments for its members participating in a worship group. (See “Yearly Meeting Finances” in Chapter 8.)

It is important that those who start a worship group be dedicated to the leadings of the Light and that the group be devoted to the growth of the Spirit among them. This goal will help the group through discouragements and setbacks, which are bound to occur. Groups suffer through periods when they are weakened by departures of participants or in other ways – when their very existence seems threatened and when it is hard to remember that a meeting’s life is grounded in the Spirit. There may be times when only one or two meet for worship at the appointed hour. It is worthwhile to persevere at these times, not only for those few in attendance but for those unable to attend, that they may be upheld in the Light and that all may come to know the comfort of an ongoing meeting. “For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them” (Matthew 18:20).

When a worship group feels it is ready to organize and conduct business in the manner of an established meeting, it may, but is not required to, ask its sponsoring monthly meeting to recognize it as a preparative meeting. Occasionally a worship group develops in its organization to the point where it is acting as a preparative meeting even though it has never asked to be so
recognized. In such a situation it may be appropriate to apply for monthly meeting status without first being recognized as a preparative meeting.

Occasionally a worship group does not change or grow over time and the group determines that it will remain a worship group. In this case it may be helpful for the worship group and the sponsoring monthly meeting to discuss their continuing relationship, taking care that neither group is overtaxed.

Occasionally a worship group loses its attenders or agrees that it is no longer a functioning group. The worship group’s correspondent should notify its sponsoring meeting of the group’s desire to lay itself down and work with the meeting to make sure the process unfolds in good order.

### Preparative Meetings

A preparative meeting is a meeting for worship and for business that is under the care of, and reports regularly to, a sponsoring monthly meeting, and that ordinarily looks forward to becoming a monthly meeting. If a worship group is ready to be recognized as a preparative meeting, it asks its sponsoring monthly meeting for this recognition. As a preparative meeting, it continues to receive care and counsel from its sponsoring monthly meeting. A preparative meeting may be led to change from one sponsoring monthly meeting to another, if the circumstances require.

After the manner of a monthly meeting, a preparative meeting has officers and committees as needed, holds a meeting for business once a month, and may receive and distribute funds on its own behalf. It regularly sends a copy of the minutes of its meeting for business to the sponsoring monthly meeting’s standing committee. A preparative meeting may not receive members, take marriages or committed relationships under its care, or otherwise act formally as an established meeting; such actions are brought to and carried out through its sponsoring monthly meeting. Friends participating in a preparative meeting customarily hold their membership in the sponsoring monthly meeting, which
covers assessments to the yearly and quarterly meetings until the preparative meeting is ready to assume that responsibility. (See “Yearly Meeting Finances” in Chapter 8.)

Preparative meetings ordinarily look forward to growth and development that may enable them to become monthly meetings – though this process depends upon many factors and the timeline varies widely. Some preparative meetings remain so for a prolonged time. It is important for a long-term preparative meeting and its sponsoring monthly meeting to discern whether the group will remain a preparative meeting or revert to a worship group. When the preparative meeting discerns whether it will continue or lay itself down, it works with its sponsoring monthly meeting to determine what level of continued support is needed. If the decision is to lay itself down, this may involve the winding down of the group’s finances and the notification of other Quaker groups about its dissolution.

**Recognition of New Gatherings**

The worship group or preparative meeting is usually sponsored by a monthly meeting. Occasionally it is more practical or reasonable for the worship group or preparative meeting to apply directly to the appropriate quarterly meeting for recognition. Either the quarterly meeting’s Ministry & Oversight or Ministry & Counsel Committee acts as a support committee for the developing group, or it appoints a separate support committee. Recognition directly through quarterly meetings is logistically difficult and is used only when there is no alternative. In Montana, several worship groups come under the care of the Montana Gathering of Friends functioning as a monthly meeting.

**Establishment of Monthly Meetings**

In order to become an independent monthly meeting, a preparative meeting (or, in some cases, a worship group) usually consults first with the standing committee appointed by the sponsoring
monthly meeting. If the way opens, the preparative meeting sends a letter to the clerk of the sponsoring monthly meeting asking that its request be forwarded to the quarterly meeting. The letter describes why the preparative meeting seeks to become a monthly meeting and how the group’s attenders know that their group is ready to do so. If the monthly meeting concurs, it forwards this request to the Ministry & Oversight or Ministry & Counsel Committee of the quarterly meeting. If the latter committee feels it right and timely, it recommends recognition of the new monthly meeting to the quarterly meeting and asks for the appointment of a Visiting Committee.

Different quarterly meetings may vary somewhat in their processes for recognizing monthly meetings. The quarterly meeting’s Visiting Committee usually consists of four or five Friends, including one or two members of the monthly meeting standing committee, and one or two others who have not been associated with the preparative meeting. The Visiting Committee meets with the prospective monthly meeting, making sure its members are aware of the responsibilities of a monthly meeting and giving all possible guidance. Great tenderness, care, and deliberation at this stage may prevent a preparative meeting from becoming a monthly meeting without adequate structure in place that will allow it to succeed independently. The Visiting Committee attends meetings for worship and meetings for business and visits with members and attenders of the preparative meeting. During this time, if not beforehand, the preparative meeting addresses the following:

1. *Spiritual condition.* Does the preparative meeting function under divine guidance? Is the meeting for worship the center of the life of the meeting? What is the vitality of the meetings for worship? Are they held in the spirit of expectant waiting and communion with God? How does the preparative meeting nurture the spiritual growth of its members?

2. *History and experience.* How long has the group been meeting? What relations does it have with other local and regional meetings, and with other Quaker organizations? What geographical area does it serve? Where and when is its
meeting for worship? What is the usual attendance? How many Friends, other attenders, and children are there in the meeting? Of those taking responsibility for the meeting, how many appear well settled in the area? What are the meeting’s social concerns?

3. *Evidence of good order.* Has the preparative meeting studied *Faith and Practice* of North Pacific Yearly Meeting, especially the chapter “The Monthly Meeting”? Does it hold a meeting for business once a month? How are minutes taken and approved? How are the functions of clerk and other officers understood? What committees does it have? How are the functions of the committees on ministry and worship and pastoral care being carried out? How are financial responsibilities being handled? How does the meeting handle the selection of officers and committees and of a Nominating Committee? How are children cared for by the meeting? How does the meeting provide religious education for children and adults?

4. *Other information.* Other questions or issues may arise which either the Visiting Committee or the preparative meeting need to address.

If the Visiting Committee agrees that the preparative meeting is ready to become a monthly meeting, it prepares a written report. The report refers to the preparative meeting’s responses to the questions above. The Visiting Committee presents this report at the next business meeting of the quarterly meeting, with a recommendation for action. The quarterly meeting is the body that recognizes new monthly meetings.

The clerk of the quarterly meeting sends a minute recognizing the new monthly meeting to the yearly meeting Coordinating Committee and presiding clerk. The presiding clerk announces the creation of the new monthly meeting at the next Annual Session of North Pacific Yearly Meeting. The new monthly meeting functions as a monthly meeting as soon as its status is recognized by the quarterly meeting, although its transition away from the sponsoring monthly meeting may take place gradually over the year following recognition.
After the quarterly meeting recognizes the new monthly meeting, the Visiting Committee continues to assist both it and the sponsoring monthly meeting with the process of separation and transition. The transition process may involve transfers of membership and property, and may also require changes in financial responsibilities. When the transition is complete, usually within a year of the quarterly meeting’s recognition, the sponsoring monthly meeting’s standing committee is laid down. During this year, members of the Visiting Committee may attend the new monthly meeting’s meetings for worship and business and give whatever support is requested.

If the Visiting Committee or the quarterly meeting is not led to recognize the preparative meeting as a monthly meeting, it proceeds tenderly to explain the hesitations. The quarterly meeting may establish a committee to help the requesting group address any obstacles to its application.
Mary Lou Goertzen
Florence Worship Group
A quarterly meeting is a cooperative association of two or more monthly meetings in a given geographical area and is composed of Friends from its constituent monthly meetings, preparative meetings, and worship groups, as well as interested persons within its area who are remote from any established Friends group.

Traditionally a quarterly meeting met four times a year. A regional meeting which met twice a year was called a half-yearly meeting. It is the practice in North Pacific Yearly Meeting to use the term “quarterly meeting” for any regional meeting composed of monthly meetings, regardless of how often it meets.

At the time of publication, three quarterly meetings constitute North Pacific Yearly Meeting:

- Willamette Quarterly Meeting (WQM), covering Oregon, southwest Washington, and southern Idaho;
- Pacific Northwest Quarterly Meeting (PNQM), covering northern Idaho and most of Washington;
- Montana Gathering of Friends (MGOF). The worship group in Sheridan (WY) is formally unaffiliated but often meets with MGOF.

The purpose of a quarterly meeting is to strengthen the life and fellowship of meetings and other Friends groups in the area and to provide a link in transmitting business and other information
between them and North Pacific Yearly Meeting. A quarterly meeting contributes in many different ways to the growth of the spiritual life and fellowship of its meetings and other Friends in its area, including children, Junior Friends, and Young Adult Friends. A quarterly meeting session itself contributes by providing religious fellowship, a wider variety of ministry during worship than individual meetings usually experience, and programs which provide for consideration of the deeper interests of the Religious Society of Friends. Quarterly meetings hear informal reports on activities from constituent groups and, at a spring session, receive their more formal State of Society reports (see Chapter 5, “The Monthly Meeting”). It is in this informal and formal sharing that Friends become aware of the state of the spiritual life within the quarterly meeting.

Outside its regular sessions, the quarterly meeting contributes by developing programs for its young people, by arranging for retreats and other gatherings, and by encouraging and coordinating intervisitation throughout its area. The quarterly meeting may act as a fiscal agent for other events or activities (for example, WQM’s Men’s Retreat or PNQM’s Silent Retreat).

A quarterly meeting provides an opportunity for considering and acting upon concerns from individuals and meetings and forwarding those approved to Annual Session or the appropriate standing committee of the yearly meeting. It also addresses issues which pertain to all Friends but for which there may not be sufficient concern or energy in any one individual meeting. A quarterly meeting is concerned with strengthening and supporting its constituent groups. It is responsible for nurturing new or remote gatherings of Friends. When a sponsoring monthly meeting is clear that a worship group or preparative meeting under its care is ready to become a monthly meeting (see Chapter 6, “New Gatherings of Friends”), it brings its recommendation to the quarterly meeting. In a spirit of tenderness and welcome, the quarterly meeting’s Ministry & Oversight or Ministry & Counsel Committee establishes a visiting committee to meet with the worship group or preparative meeting and with the visiting committee from the sponsoring monthly meeting.
When all are clear that the new group is ready, the Ministry & Oversight Committee or Ministry & Counsel Committee brings a recommendation to the quarterly meeting’s meeting for business for approval. The quarterly meeting reports the establishment of the new monthly meeting to the yearly meeting.

The quarterly meeting is also the appropriate body to consider a request from a monthly meeting whose members believe it should be laid down or united with another meeting. After one of its monthly meetings was laid down, the Montana Gathering of Friends, advised by NPYM’s Ministry & Oversight Committee, has taken on some functions of a monthly meeting.

To carry out its responsibilities, a quarterly meeting meets regularly, appoints necessary officers and committees, and conducts its business in the usual manner of Friends. It collects and administers funds as needed, derived from an annual assessment of local meetings, based on their numbers. It may appoint an Interim or Continuing Committee to help plan for its sessions and act for it between sessions. The quarterly meeting Ministry & Oversight Committee or Ministry & Counsel Committee is composed of experienced and spiritually sensitive Friends. This committee nurtures the spiritual life of Friends of all ages, contributes to the care and counsel of meetings and worship groups, and advises on the good order and spiritual life of the quarterly meeting sessions. The clerk of each quarterly meeting Ministry & Oversight Committee or Ministry & Counsel Committee, or a designee, serves on the Friend-in-Residence Committee of the yearly meeting.

**Formation of Quarterly Meetings.** A quarterly meeting may be established upon yearly meeting acceptance of a request from two or more monthly meetings or a request from a quarterly meeting which wishes to be divided into two such meetings. The yearly meeting may also initiate setting off a new quarterly meeting. In any of these cases, the yearly meeting appoints a

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1. Specific structures and procedures vary among quarterly meetings. Each quarterly meeting in North Pacific Yearly Meeting maintains a handbook describing its own practices.
committee to assist in the organization, and receives the recommendation of that committee before recognizing the quarterly meeting. Where geographical expanses or other circumstances warrant, the formation of associations or gatherings other than quarterly meetings may prove helpful.
Chapter 8

The Yearly Meeting

As a yearly meeting we are restless to take corporate action to change the unequal, unjust world in which we live. We are also called to be a community of Friends as a yearly meeting, pushed toward the important things we can only do together. We have a body of experience we can draw on and maintain. We are in this for the long haul.

*Epistle of Britain Yearly Meeting, 2015*

**Mission & Vision**

The purpose of North Pacific Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends is to provide a means for Friends to strengthen and support one another in a common search for divine Truth and Light.

North Pacific Yearly Meeting, both as an organization and as an Annual Session, supports and encourages Friends, as individuals, monthly meetings, and worship groups, deepening their spiritual center and moving into Spirit-led action.

North Pacific Yearly Meeting will:

- Hold an Annual Session to bring Friends together to worship, attend to business, and build community for all ages;
- Serve as an ongoing resource to its meetings, worship groups, and Remote Friends by: fostering leadership; facilitating communication about and among Friends within
NPYM; providing opportunities for education, service, and spiritual enrichment; encouraging visitation among Friends; publishing *Faith and Practice* and other resources; and supporting meetings and worship groups to make Quakers a more visible presence;

- Nurture spiritual development and a sense of community for our children and young people, and support their transition to adult participation in the life of Friends;
- Support discernment and implementation of traditional and emerging concerns arising from Friends’ testimonies;
- Foster relationships with the wider world of Friends.

The yearly meeting is composed of the members of its monthly meetings, including those in preparative meetings and worship groups, whose privilege and responsibility it is to participate in and support the yearly meeting and its Annual Session. NPYM’s affiliated groups and individuals are located in the states of Idaho, Montana, Oregon, and Washington.

The right ordering of the yearly meeting requires care, thought, and prayer. This right ordering depends not only on individual strengths and abilities, but on the leading of the Spirit. Preparation for and participation in the Annual Session is an opportunity for the body of the yearly meeting to enjoy and benefit from the many gifts of individuals in its widely scattered meetings and for the yearly meeting to be of service to them.

We welcome to our Annual Session attenders of monthly meetings, preparative meetings, and worship groups; Remote Friends in our region; members of other yearly meetings; and all interested persons. We gather to search in the Light, to find renewal, and to celebrate our joy in coming together again. We have faith that all who attend do so as part of their personal seeking of God’s truth. Friends of all ages benefit from and contribute to the Annual Session. Although there may be programs for children, Central Friends, Junior Friends, and Young Adult Friends, all are an integral part of this experience.

The yearly meeting holds its Annual Session in the summer, rotating locations throughout our region. Annual Session provides
many opportunities for deepening fellowship and the life of the Spirit. The plenary sessions, occasions for dealing with business, also provide opportunities for spiritual growth. They consider reports from NPYM committees and Friends organizations, give attention to communications, including preparation of an “Epistle to Friends Everywhere,” and deal with appropriate business and concerns. In addition to corporate worship, other opportunities for spiritual enrichment include worship-sharing groups, interest groups, programs for children and Junior Friends, meetings of Young Adult Friends, the presence and inspiration of visiting Friends, and Friendly visiting.

NPYM makes its major decisions in plenary session at the Annual Session. Other decisions may be made between Annual Sessions by the Coordinating Committee or Executive Committee.

**Bringing Concerns before the Yearly Meeting**

A genuine concern is a spiritual matter. Usually a concern arises in the conscience of an individual and is initially seasoned in a local meeting or committee. A concern may come to Annual Session from a variety of sources:

- From a monthly meeting, quarterly meeting, or other group of Friends;
- From the Coordinating Committee or from an NPYM standing committee;
- From an ad hoc committee of the yearly meeting;
- From the floor of the Annual Session.

Regardless of where a concern starts, it is seasoned before being considered at Annual Session. It is expected that concerns that come before the yearly meeting will be considered widely throughout the yearly meeting before placement on an Annual Session agenda. To help with the discernment process it is suggested that Friends use the following queries as a basis for preparing a concern that may come to the yearly meeting. Responses to these queries may be provided as a separate document.
• What is the concern? What specific action are you asking the yearly meeting to take?

• Who is bringing this concern to Annual Session?

• Why is this concern particularly appropriate for yearly meeting action as opposed to action by many local meetings?

• What decisions and actions have taken place in local or regional groups?

• How have you been in contact with other meetings or groups in NPYM about this concern?

• How have their viewpoints been integrated into this concern?

• Have you worked with a yearly meeting committee on this issue? What is their recommendation?

• Does the yearly meeting have the capacity to carry out the proposed action?

To allow adequate time for Friends to season the matter, the presiding clerk is notified five months prior to Annual Session. In the intervening time the presiding clerk will work with those presenting the concern to discern the best possible course of action. The final decision may include any or all of the following:

• Send the concern to one of the yearly meeting committees for seasoning or action.

• Work with the Friends presenting the concern and appropriate yearly meeting committees to facilitate seasoning through other local meetings. Having other local meetings consider this concern and take action may mitigate the need for time on the Annual Session agenda. If meetings and worship groups are asked for feedback before Annual Session, the Friends raising the concern will need to allow sufficient time for discernment by the constituent bodies of the yearly meeting.

• Ask for time on the Spring Coordinating Committee agenda to season this concern. The Friends presenting the concern may be invited to attend that meeting.

• Ask the Friends presenting the concern to do further seasoning and discernment at the local, quarterly meeting,
NPYM committee, or individual support group level.

- Decide after taking some or all of the above actions that the concern is not appropriate for NPYM action at this time.
- In consultation with next year’s presiding clerk, decide whether to hold the item over for consideration next year.

If the concern is ready for yearly meeting consideration, a draft of the proposed minute, along with background material including responses to the queries, is given to the presiding clerk one month before the Annual Session.

In exceptional circumstances the presiding clerk may entertain a minute or concern from the floor of a plenary session. If so, it should be presented briefly and heard without discussion. Before such a concern is laid before the plenary session for its consideration, the presiding clerk usually consults with the clerk of the Coordinating Committee and refers it to the appropriate yearly meeting committee for consideration. The concern may then be acted on in a later plenary session or may be referred for seasoning and consideration at another annual gathering.

When a concern is placed before a plenary session and unity is reached, the yearly meeting is under the burden to follow through with action appropriate to the concern.

**Relationships with Wider Friends Organizations**

North Pacific Yearly Meeting is an independent yearly meeting. Although we attempt to keep in touch with all Friends, we have formally affiliated with the following organizations:

1. *American Friends Service Committee (AFSC)*. The yearly meeting appoints four Friends, serving overlapping three-year terms, to become members of the AFSC Corporation (AFSC’s representative body).

2. *Friends Committee on National Legislation (FCNL)*. The yearly meeting appoints six Friends, serving overlapping two-year
terms (starting September 1), as representatives to the General Committee of FCNL.

3. **Friends for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer Concerns (FLGBTQC).** The yearly meeting appoints two Friends, serving overlapping two-year terms, as correspondents to FLGBTQC.

4. **Friends Peace Teams (FPT).** The yearly meeting appoints two Friends, serving overlapping three-year terms, as representatives to FPT.

5. **Friends World Committee for Consultation (FWCC).** The yearly meeting appoints four Friends, serving overlapping three-year terms, as representatives to FWCC’s Section of the Americas. Terms begin on the January 1st following appointment. The newly appointed representatives are encouraged, both by the yearly meeting and by FWCC, to attend the annual Section meeting immediately following their July appointment even if that occurs before their NPYM term starts.

The yearly meeting may send representatives to the FWCC Triennial Meeting, to be appointed at the NPYM Annual Session prior to the Triennial.

6. **Friends Bulletin Corporation.** Friends Bulletin Corporation publishes *Western Friend* (formerly *Friends Bulletin*), a periodical by and for Friends in Pacific Yearly Meeting, North Pacific Yearly Meeting, and Intermountain Yearly Meeting. NPYM appoints three directors, one from each quarterly meeting, to the Western Friend Board of Directors, which guides both editorial and business aspects of publishing the periodical and other works.

7. **Quaker Earthcare Witness (QEW).** The yearly meeting appoints one representative and one alternate to the QEW Steering Committee.

The yearly meeting selects suitable individuals – based on their interest, ability, experience, geographic distribution, and capacity to work with the particular organization – to be our representatives to the larger groups. The chief responsibility of these representatives is maintaining two-way communication
between the organization and members of the yearly meeting. Representatives are encouraged to attend meetings of the organization, but it is sometimes more effective, as well as more economical of finances and energy, to bring to the Annual Session a person representing a particular organization.

Job descriptions for these representatives and correspondents are available from NPYM. A summary of the responsibilities of yearly meeting representatives to each affiliated organization is given to the representative at the time of appointment. The yearly meeting budget includes travel funds for representatives to attend meetings of affiliated organizations.

**Affiliation with Organizations.** NPYM is cautious about affiliating with other bodies, wanting to be clear that such action is both compatible with our understanding of Quakerism and within our capacity to carry out our responsibilities with integrity given our small financial and personnel resources. Accordingly, NPYM has a policy for considering affiliation with other organizations. The procedure starts with a request to affiliate (or to review an existing affiliation). Coordinating Committee then appoints an ad hoc committee of experienced Friends to explore the practical and spiritual dimensions and bring a recommendation to an Annual Session for decision. Continuing affiliations with outside organizations are reviewed periodically using a similar process.

**Yearly Meeting Finances**

The primary financial support for North Pacific Yearly Meeting comes from member meetings. The NPYM treasurer uses each meeting’s annual statistical report to calculate the meeting’s contribution based on a per-member rate called an assessment. Each monthly meeting determines whether it will contribute for all its members or only for its faithfully participating members and attenders.

The Finance & Legal Committee prepares a budget for the organization each year and presents it to Annual Session for approval. Typical components of the budget include committee
expenses; administrative expenses; support for NPYM representatives to other organizations; funds for Central Friends, Junior Friends, and Young Adult Friends; and contributions to other organizations plus a subsidy for the periodical Western Friend.

If memorial funds are received without a designation for a specific use, the NPYM treasurer consults with the family or Coordinating Committee within six months to identify a use for the money appropriate to the interests of the individual.

**Central Friends, Junior Friends, Young Adult Friends**

NPYM has adopted the following terms to describe specific age groups:

- Central Friends – 6–8th grades
- Junior Friends – high-school age Friends
- Young Adult Friends – post-high-school age, about 18 to about 35

Other Friends organizations may use different definitions.

Central Friends, Junior Friends, and Young Adult Friends all write their own epistles “to Friends everywhere” at Annual Sessions.

**Central Friends**

In NPYM, “Central Friends” is the middle-school age group, including young people who have just finished fifth grade (or equivalent) through those who have just finished eighth grade. If families and group leaders find it wise for a child at a transitional age to participate with a younger group of children or to move on to Junior Friends, they are included in those groups. Central Friends participate in a self-contained program during Annual Session. They may also go on a camping trip before or after Annual Session.
Junior Friends

In NPYM, “Junior Friends” is the high-school age group: young people who have just finished eighth grade (or equivalent) through the age of those who have just graduated from high school. Junior Friends choose their own officers and committees. They hold their own meetings for business, following the good order of Friends. They manage their own budget with general direction from their advisors and technical assistance from the NPYM treasurer as needed. Their program at Annual Session is self-contained although it usually includes participation in intergenerational worship-sharing and other activities with the larger group. Junior Friends plan their own activities at Annual Session and throughout the year. They traditionally organize a camping trip before or after Annual Session and a ski trip in winter.

Junior Friends suggest nominees for Junior Friends Advisors to the NPYM Nominating Committee. The advisors assist Junior Friends with scheduling, arrangements, budgeting, and other logistics; serve as resources about Quaker process and the good order of Friends; and act as liaison between Junior Friends and the rest of NPYM. Junior Friends also invite others to serve as “Friendly Adult Presences” (FAPs) at events.

Junior Friends send representatives to the Coordinating Committee and the Annual Session Planning Committee.

Junior Friends maintain a Code of Conduct at all events, under the care of the Junior Friends Wellness Committee.

Young Adult Friends

In NPYM, “Young Adult Friends” refers to the college and post-college age group, from high school graduation through about age 35. Like the Junior Friends, Young Adult Friends choose their own officers and committees and hold their own meetings for business following the good order of Friends. Their program at Annual Session is self-planned and largely self-contained although they share some activities with Junior Friends and participate in intergenerational worship-sharing and other activities with
the larger group. Young Adult Friends typically meet at Annual Session in summer and at New Year’s.

Young Adult Friends nominate representatives to the Coordinating Committee and the Annual Session Planning Committee, and are encouraged to participate in NPYM standing committees as interests lead and circumstances permit.

NPYM helps host electronic communication for Young Adult Friends.

**Officers**

Yearly meeting officers are nominated by the Nominating Committee and appointed by NPYM in plenary session during Annual Session. The Coordinating Committee may make appointments between Annual Sessions, or the Executive Committee may do so between Coordinating Committee meetings. Most terms of office begin on October 1. Outgoing officers are expected to complete responsibilities related to the Annual Session and to orient new appointees who are responsible for new business. Officers are selected with regard for their qualifications, their ability to serve, their geographical representation, and their resources for leadership, present and potential.

The presiding clerk, rising clerk, Coordinating Committee clerk, Coordinating Committee associate clerk, and treasurer must be members of monthly meetings within NPYM. All other positions may be held by any members or attenders.

Complete position descriptions for all yearly meeting offices are available electronically from NPYM via the internet or by request from the NPYM secretary. Summary descriptions follow here.

- The presiding clerk of the yearly meeting has responsibility for Annual Session as a whole. The clerk works with the Annual Session Planning Committee to prepare for Annual Session; write and publish the welcoming “Call to Yearly Meeting;” and prepare agendas for and clerk all plenary sessions. The presiding clerk serves as co-clerk of
the Annual Session Planning Committee and clerks the Friend-In-Residence Committee. The presiding clerk is also a member ex officio of the Coordinating Committee and shares responsibility for seeing that the instructions of the Annual Session are carried out.

- The rising clerk spends a year preparing to step into the position of presiding clerk. The rising clerk is a member of the Executive Committee, and is invited to participate with the Personnel Committee and Annual Session Planning Committee.

- The Annual Session recording clerk assists the presiding clerk in recording the minutes of the Annual Session plenary sessions, faithful to the spirit as well as the substance of the discussions, and prepares the proceedings in their final form. The recording clerk also records meetings of the Annual Session Planning Committee.

- The Coordinating Committee clerk has responsibility to the Coordinating Committee (CC), made up of members appointed by monthly meetings as well as officers and clerks of standing committees (listed below). The CC clerk facilitates networking among committees, meetings, and individual Friends and helps discern where decision making on any question most appropriately rests. The CC clerk serves as CC associate clerk for one year before and one year after their term as CC clerk to assure continuity in CC leadership.

- The Coordinating Committee associate clerk assists the Coordinating Committee clerk, clerks the Personnel Committee and coordinates the work of NPYM representatives, correspondents, and liaisons to Friends organizations. The CC associate clerk also works with the webkeeper to ensure that the NPYM website provides current and accurate information.

- The Coordinating Committee recording clerk is responsible for preparing minutes of Coordinating Committee meetings, faithful to the spirit as well as the substance of the discussions.
• The treasurer maintains the financial records of the yearly meeting; receives and disburses monies for all NPYM funds, including Annual Session and Junior Friends; and reports on financial issues to the Finance & Legal Committee and to Annual Session. The treasurer solicits annual assessments from each monthly meeting based on its statistical report as of June 1. The NPYM treasurer is available as a mentor to the Junior Friends treasurer.

• The archivist of the yearly meeting gathers and preserves materials relating to the development and history of North Pacific Yearly Meeting and reports to Coordinating Committee and to the Annual Session as requested.

**Yearly Meeting Committees**

Except for those members of the Coordinating Committee who are appointed by monthly meetings, all members of yearly meeting committees are nominated by the Nominating Committee and are appointed at Annual Session (or by the Coordinating Committee if between Annual Sessions or by the Executive Committee if between Coordinating Committee meetings). Most terms of service begin on October 1. Outgoing members are expected to complete unfinished business.

Complete descriptions for all yearly meeting committees – with notes on members, terms, responsibilities, and typical annual timelines – are kept up to date on the NPYM website and are also available from the NPYM secretary or the Nominating Committee, which is responsible for keeping the descriptions accurate. Summary descriptions follow here.

The Coordinating Committee or the yearly meeting may set up other committees as need arises. When considering changes to the committee structure, Friends take care that each committee is an aid, not an encumbrance, to strengthening and supporting each other in our common search for Truth and Light.
Standing Committees of NPYM

Coordinating Committee

The Coordinating Committee (CC) supports and enriches the life of NPYM. It is the venue through which NPYM standing committees and monthly meetings share their work and inspiration. The committee identifies and links converging and emerging issues, and offers support to groups within NPYM. In addition, the committee provides support and guidance to NPYM standing committees and appoints a Pre-Nominating Committee each spring (see Nominating Committee, below).

The Coordinating Committee handles decisions that do not involve changes to policy, that are necessary to carry out the work of the yearly meeting, and that do not require full NPYM attention at Annual Session. The first step is to determine whether the decision should be referred elsewhere. Discernment is necessary to identify which decisions can be handled at Coordinating Committee and which decisions rightly belong at Annual Session or in an NPYM standing committee, monthly meeting, or quarterly meeting.

Executive Committee

The Executive Committee consists of the Coordinating Committee clerk, NPYM presiding clerk, clerk of Ministry & Oversight Committee, treasurer, Coordinating Committee associate clerk, and the rising clerk.

The Executive Committee can make decisions that are necessary to carry out the work of the yearly meeting. In particular, these include approval of nominations or expenditures (within the framework of the budget). The Executive Committee is also authorized to approve the hiring of staff. The Executive Committee can make decisions on behalf of NPYM as may be required outside of Annual Session and between Coordinating Committee meetings. The Coordinating Committee clerk may consult the Executive Committee to determine where to refer the matter or whether Executive Committee needs to make a decision. All Executive Committee decisions are reported at the next Coordinating Committee meeting.
**Faith & Practice Committee**

The Faith & Practice Committee is responsible for the development and revision of *Faith and Practice*, our book of discipline.

The Faith & Practice Committee reviews the entire book regularly in light of current NPYM practice, organizational changes, and minutes passed by NPYM in Annual Session. The committee also considers comments received from other NPYM committees, quarterly meetings, monthly meetings, preparative meetings, worship groups, and individual Friends.

The committee will express and represent the diversity of our yearly meeting in geography, spiritual expression, and size of meeting. The committee grows and shrinks in size as the needs of the yearly meeting warrant. A small committee, meeting annually, may be sufficient during the years between substantive revisions of *Faith and Practice*.

See “Revisions to NPYM’s *Faith and Practice*” below.

**Finance & Legal Committee**

The Finance & Legal Committee provides stewardship of financial and legal matters for NPYM, and support and guidance to the NPYM treasurer. This committee prepares the annual budget for the yearly meeting, to be approved at Annual Session; develops policies and procedures involving fiscal and legal matters; makes recommendations on insurance and legal affairs; and provides oversight and support for other NPYM entities with annual budgets (e.g., Annual Session, Junior Friends).

**Information Technology Committee**

Information Technology (IT) refers to the methods, processes, and tools for generating, sharing, and storing information, along with the policies and procedures to protect the information from loss and misuse. The Information Technology Committee provides technical support and guidance for the IT needs of NPYM.

**Ministry & Oversight Committee**

The Ministry & Oversight Committee (M&O) fosters the spiritual life and good order of the yearly meeting as a whole and at Annual
Session. Responsibilities include encouraging communication among meetings and worship groups; serving as a resource for local M&O committees; coordinating with other standing committees about trends and needs within the yearly meeting; and planning retreats and other educational opportunities.

Responsibilities during Annual Session include orientation for first-time attenders at Annual Session; presentation of the State of Society reports; meeting for memorials; care of the spiritual needs of individual attenders as needed; and care of the closing meeting for worship.

**Nominating Committee**

The Nominating Committee carefully considers the needs of the yearly meeting positions and asks appropriate people whether they will accept nominations to yearly meeting and Annual Session positions. The Committee prepares as full a slate as possible for approval at Annual Session. At other times of the year, nominations may be approved by the Coordinating Committee or the Executive Committee.

**Pre-Nominating Committee.** The Nominating Committee does not nominate itself. Instead, a Pre-Nominating Committee proposes new members of Nominating Committee to be approved at Annual Session. The Pre-Nominating Committee is an ad hoc group chosen by the Coordinating Committee in the spring of each year. It consists of two or three experienced Friends, usually members of Coordinating Committee, who carefully consider the needs of the Nominating Committee and NPYM as a whole. Each year’s Pre-Nominating Committee is laid down after the new members of the Nominating Committee have been approved.

**Outreach & Visitation Committee**

The Outreach & Visitation Committee seeks ways to provide and stimulate personal visitation and other forms of communication throughout the yearly meeting, with a particular concern for preparative meetings, worship groups, and Friends remote from any organized group. The work of the committee is meant to coordinate with and support monthly meetings, quarterly
meetings, and NPYM’s Ministry & Oversight Committee in their respective responsibilities in this area.

**Peace & Social Concerns Committee**

This committee’s main purpose is to facilitate communication and networking among meetings, worship groups, and other Friends on social and peace issues and emerging concerns. To do so, it networks with meetings and worship groups, NPYM representatives to Friends organizations working on peace and social justice issues, and other regional and national organizations that address issues of concern to NPYM Friends. This committee helps season peace and social concerns minutes to come before the yearly meeting as a whole.

**Personnel Committee**

The Personnel Committee hires and supervises the yearly meeting staff. The committee consists of the Coordinating Committee clerk, the Coordinating Committee associate clerk (who clerks the Personnel Committee), and the presiding clerk of the yearly meeting. The rising clerk is invited to participate.

**Site Committee**

The Site Committee is responsible for exploring and making site recommendations to NPYM about where future Annual Sessions might be held – typically on a six-year rotation (two years at a site in western Washington, two years in western Oregon, two years east of the Cascades). The committee reports to Coordinating Committee and works closely with the presiding clerk and the general arrangements clerk.

**Youth Committee**

The Youth Committee supports meetings and worship groups in their work with children, youth, and young adults. This committee nurtures spiritual development and a sense of community for our children and young people, and supports their transition to adult participation in the life of Friends.

This committee administers NPYM’s Youth Opportunity Fund for young people ages 12 - 35, to support activities that promote their spiritual growth as Friends. See npym.org for details.
Committees related to Annual Session

Annual Session Planning Committee

This committee plans and runs Annual Session. The presiding clerk of the yearly meeting and the general arrangements clerk convene the group, which includes:

- Children’s program coordinator;
- General arrangements clerk;
- General arrangements assistant clerk;
- Physical arrangements clerk;
- Presiding clerk;
- Program coordinator;
- Registrar;
- Volunteer coordinator;
- Representatives from Junior Friends and Young Adult Friends.

The Annual Session Planning Committee appoints other positions necessary to the event, including food coordinator, transportation coordinator, hospitality coordinator, creative activities coordinator, worship-sharing group coordinator, interest group coordinator, “Daily Bulletin” editor, and bookstore manager.

Epistle Committee

The Epistle Committee helps keep NPYM connected with the wider world of Friends through the use of epistles. The Epistle Committee writes an epistle “to Friends everywhere” describing the spirit of our Annual Session, which is then sent to yearly meetings around the world. The Epistle Committee receives and reviews epistles from other yearly meetings and shares these with NPYM Friends.

Friend-in-Residence Committee

Each year the yearly meeting invites a Friend from outside its membership to attend and address the Annual Session. The person, nominated by the Friend-in-Residence Committee, is
one whose experience and spiritual gifts are expected to enrich Friends at the Annual Session. The Friend-in-Residence gives a plenary session presentation and visits and interacts with Friends of all ages throughout the Annual Session.

**Yearly Meeting Staff**

Most work for the yearly meeting is done by volunteers. NPYM employs a secretary (hired and supervised by the Personnel Committee), an Annual Session Children’s Program coordinator (hired by the Personnel Committee and supervised by the clerk of the Youth Committee), and a webkeeper (hired by the Personnel Committee and supervised by the clerk of the Information Technology Committee).

**Revisions to NPYM’s Faith and Practice**

North Pacific Yearly Meeting conceives of *Faith and Practice* as a gift and a living, evolving document rather than a finished product and final word. It reflects the growing experience of NPYM Friends as we seek to know and follow the Inner Light. Friends are encouraged to read and use *Faith and Practice* in this spirit.

Changes to *Faith and Practice* come about in different ways. Revisions in Part I (Faith, Chapters 2-4) may arise from emerging spiritual disciplines and testimonies and from new Light on how we describe our experiential faith.

The Faith & Practice Committee ensures that Part II (Practice, Chapters 5-11) accurately reflects structural changes in NPYM (offices, standing committees, etc.). Other revisions in Part II may arise from evolving practices within NPYM on issues such as membership or formation of new meetings, or from new challenges facing the Quaker community.

Any Friends group or individual within NPYM may suggest changes to NPYM’s *Faith and Practice*. Suggestions that have been seasoned through group discernment are particularly valuable. All
suggestions are given in writing to the Faith & Practice Committee for consideration.

The Faith & Practice Committee collects minor “housekeeping” edits to Faith and Practice and updates the book when there are enough such changes to warrant it. If, after discussion with the Coordinating Committee, the Faith & Practice Committee discerns that some issue requires wider review, it follows the pattern for substantive changes.

When the Faith & Practice Committee discerns that substantive changes to a chapter of Faith and Practice are needed, the committee first consults with the Coordinating Committee and then communicates widely with Friends to prepare an initial draft for review and comment. It may at the same time request additional committee members to aid the work. A chapter may go through several draft-and-review cycles. The committee then presents a working draft of the revised chapter at one Annual Session for seasoning throughout the yearly meeting and again (further revised, if necessary) at the following Annual Session for acceptance. After the revised chapter is accepted, it is incorporated into the print and online versions of Faith and Practice. If broader revision of the whole book of discipline is required, the process of draft and review may take considerable time.
Lucy Garnett
Salmon Bay Meeting
Chapter 9

Membership

And oh, how sweet and pleasant it is to the truly spiritual eye to see several sorts of believers, several forms of Christians in the school of Christ, every one learning their own lesson, performing their own peculiar service, and knowing, owning, and loving one another in their several places and different performances to their Master, to whom they are to give an account, and not quarrel with one another about their different practices.

Isaac Penington, 1659

The test for membership should not be doctrinal agreement, nor adherence to certain testimonies, but evidence of sincere seeking and striving for Truth, together with an understanding of the lines along which Friends are seeking that Truth.

Friends World Conference, 1952

Our membership of this, or any other Christian fellowship, is never based on worthiness..... We none of us are members because we have attained a certain standard of goodness, but rather because, in this matter, we still are all humble learners in the school of Christ. Our membership is of no importance whatever unless it signifies that we are committed to something of far greater and more lasting significance than can adequately be conveyed by the closest association with any movement or organization. Our membership of the Society of Friends should commit us to the discipleship of the living Christ. When we have made that choice and come under that high compulsion, our membership will have endorsed it.

Edgar Dunstan, 1956
Membership in a Quaker meeting is a spirit-led journey of coming to know ourselves as individual-in-community, a journey on which we experience meeting as a place of acceptance, a place of shared values, a place of transformation, and a place of obedience. These stages represent not so much a specific way toward membership, but rather the four points of the compass, a way to locate ourselves and describe our progress. By necessity, each individual’s actual journey remains unique, but each will in some way be bounded and defined by these four cardinal points. As Quakers we have no creed to recite, no confession to confess, no rituals to undergo that will reliably bring us into the fullness of membership. But we do have a rich and inspiring tradition; we have each other; and we have the Spirit of God which, we are promised, will “lead into all things.”

Thomas Gates, 2004

The Religious Society of Friends is a community of faith based on a shared experience of the “Inward Light,” “the Spirit of Christ by which we are guided” (in George Fox’s words). Together Friends worship and grow in the Spirit, remaining ever open and obedient to the Power within and holding the life and teachings of Jesus as an example. Becoming a member is a milestone in the process of seeking Truth, whereby the individual and the community are drawn together in mutual search and understanding. Membership is the outward recognition of an inner experience of the Living God and of unity with other members of the Society. In harkening to that of God within themselves, Friends have come to recognize “that of God in everyone.”

Although regularly enrolled membership, as we know it, was not a feature of the early Society of Friends, a recognized membership did exist. In its first years the Society was a radical and charismatic movement, very much at odds with the civil and religious institutions of its day. Joining with Friends involved rejection by society, as well as the risk of imprisonment, physical abuse, and economic ruin. Only those deeply convinced and committed were willing to face such consequences and be considered Friends and members of the fellowship. Early problems with fanaticism and spiritual irresponsibility led to the practice of disownment. If reconciliation was not successful, those who misrepresented the Society in word or deed were disowned. That is, Friends made
a public declaration that the disowned person did not represent them. Such persons were still welcome to worship and fellowship, but were not allowed to participate in the meeting for business. Disownment later became greatly abused in enforcing a strict code of Quaker conduct.

Formal membership was not established until the eighteenth century. However, early Friends used the word “member” in their correspondence and drew up lists of those suffering for Truth’s sake. When the Religious Society of Friends had become respectable and some persons came to it solely for material support, lists of members were drawn up to identify those committed to Truth and entitled to such support by the meeting. At the same time the practice of enrolling children of Friends as “birthright members” was also begun. Our yearly meeting does not employ birthright membership; we encourage our children to make their own decisions about membership upon reaching adulthood.

A member is recorded by a monthly meeting as an adherent of the Religious Society of Friends. There are those who may be faithful in attendance at worship and diligent in their service to Friends and yet choose not to be recognized as members; they are commonly called “attenders.” The choice to become a member is a motion of the heart and leading of the Spirit.

Membership in the Religious Society of Friends involves a continuing commitment. It implies a readiness and desire to join in the common effort of the Society to seek and follow the Inward Light, as well as some experience and understanding of that Spirit as it is known by Friends – a reality which guides and directs, which gives strength to act upon this guidance and which brings unity with the spirit of God. Decision making by Friends depends upon a common understanding of the guidance of the Spirit as we unite in worship for meeting for business. Membership implies a desire to attend meetings for worship and business regularly, to give service through committees and otherwise as way opens, and to share in financial responsibilities. Membership is an outward sign of commitment to the monthly meeting and to the larger Society.
The Religious Society of Friends desires to include in its membership all persons who find themselves in unity with its faith and practices or are committed to growing toward that unity. Since the admission of members is the responsibility of the monthly meeting, membership, in practice, means that the applicant comes to know the aspirations and ways of a particular meeting and is prepared to share in the responsibilities, difficulties, and joys of its fellowship. Those who are able to help the meeting and be helped by it are likely to thrive as members. Usually Friends become members of monthly meetings nearby. Under appropriate circumstances, an application for membership may be considered from an applicant living at a distance from the meeting. Membership in a monthly meeting also includes membership in the quarterly meeting and the yearly meeting of which the monthly meeting is a part, and in the larger Religious Society of Friends.

Our fellowship with all seekers, and our relationship to a particular meeting, does not cause us to overlook our identity as Friends. The meeting ensures that a prospective member has some knowledge of the wider body of Friends, as there is great diversity in the practices and beliefs of the various branches of the Society. It is everyone’s responsibility to be aware that differences do exist and, more importantly, to understand the common faith and experience that unites all Friends, everywhere. A Friend will be open to sensing the presence of God in any meeting visited, and a meeting will be comfortable welcoming Friends of all persuasions.

Religious experience is profoundly important to Friends, who allow considerable freedom in describing their common religious life and experience. The Religious Society of Friends has, however, continually been part of the Christian fellowship, as Friends understand Christianity. Friends are aware that religious truth, the encounter with the ground of our being, or the experience of Christ, comes to different persons in different ways. Seekers find themselves in various stages of growth in their experience of Truth and in the words they use to express this. An open heart and mind and an earnest desire for ever-increasing Light is the chief concern. While readiness for membership implies a degree of religious insight, it does not assume attainment of perfection or an
end to development. Participation in the life of the meeting and living daily by the Spirit results in continuing religious growth.

**Attenders**

The Society values the presence and participation of everyone drawn to Friends. Attenders are welcome to take part in all aspects of the life of the meeting. The degree to which attenders share in the responsibility for the meeting gives weight to their discernment during meeting for business. Customarily, regular attenders are listed in the meeting’s directory. Many Friends groups in NPYM draw little distinction between members and attenders.

The monthly meeting encourages faithful attenders to seek membership as a part of the further development of their religious lives. The Pastoral Care Committee1 notices when attenders are approaching readiness for membership as shown by their regular attendance at worship and business meetings, participation in discussions, understanding of the testimonies, and willingness to assist with meeting tasks. The committee offers to discuss the possibility of membership with attenders and encourages attenders considering membership to talk with a member of the committee and then to write a letter to the clerk of monthly meeting applying for membership.

**Admission to Membership**

A person who is considering joining the Religious Society of Friends develops a sympathetic understanding of its faith by consistent attendance and study, becoming familiar with its way of worship, its manner of conducting business, and the responsibilities of membership. Children and young adults are welcome to apply for membership as they feel led. It is important for the applicant to become familiar with the yearly meeting’s *Faith and Practice*, and with Friends history, principles, and testimonies.

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1. “The Oversight Committee” is a traditional Quaker name for the committee that organizes memorials, handles requests for membership
Queries for Clearness about Membership

Is the application for membership procedure clear to you?
What brings you to apply for membership now?
Are you familiar with Friends testimonies on simplicity, peace, integrity, community, and equality? In what ways do you find the testimonies helpful? Not helpful? How closely are you in harmony with Friends testimonies?
What attracted you to Friends beliefs and practices? Are there some that you find puzzling or disturbing?
How would you describe the spiritual journey which has led you to seek membership in the Society of Friends?
What do you see as the responsibilities of membership?
Are you aware of the responsibilities of members in a community without hierarchy? What gifts do you bring to enrich the life of the meeting?
Do you understand the relationship among the monthly, quarterly, and yearly meetings? Are you aware of the programs, services, and facilities at these three levels of our organizational structure?
Are you comfortable with our spiritual and theological diversity?
Where might it be a source of strength for you and the Society of Friends? Where might it cause problems?
Are you comfortable with a meeting for worship based on expectant silence? Are you familiar with the source of vocal ministry? Are you able to discern between messages that are intended for yourself and messages that are meant for the meeting as a whole?
What are some milestones in your spiritual journey? How do you expect membership in the meeting to help you on this journey?
Are you familiar with the way in which Friends conduct our meetings for business? What has been your experience with meeting for business?
Are there problems that you would like to share, or should share, that might be of concern to the meeting as they pertain to our resources and our ability to help you?
How will your membership affect your family relationships?
How are you prepared to support the meeting’s nurturing and religious education of its children?
Do you have any questions?
The monthly meeting makes a decision to admit a person into membership in the Society in a meeting for business.

An applicant for membership first writes a letter to the monthly meeting expressing a desire to become a member, including reasons for wanting to join. The letter is given to the clerk of the meeting who promptly acknowledges receipt of the letter and forwards it to the clerk of the Pastoral Care Committee. The letter is read to the meeting for business either at the first meeting following its receipt or at the time the committee reports on its recommendation.

The Pastoral Care Committee appoints a Clearness Committee of two or three Friends, at least one of whom is a member of the Pastoral Care Committee, to meet with the applicant. (Practice varies from meeting to meeting whether the Clearness Committee members are members of the meeting.) This Clearness Committee, after making sure that the applicant has a copy of Faith and Practice and has become familiar with it, arranges for a time and place for one or more visits with the applicant. (See also “Clearness Committees” in Chapter 5, “The Monthly Meeting.”)

These visits serve to determine the readiness of the applicant and the meeting for this membership by providing an opportunity (1) for the visiting Friends to become acquainted with the applicant on a deeper level, (2) for the applicant to ask questions, and (3) for the visiting Friends to provide any help needed to prepare the applicant and the meeting for this new membership. The topics below, many of which will arise naturally in the course of marriage under the care of the meeting, and coordinates help and comfort for Friends in need. In many meetings this function is combined with care for the community’s spiritual life, hence the common name “Ministry & Oversight Committee” —the name used by NPYM and its quarterly meetings. However, “oversight” has connotations of slavery for many Friends, and they may use some other name in their meetings, such as Ministry & Counsel for a combined committee. Each Friends’ group names its committees in its own way. Reflecting the concern about “oversight,” this Faith and Practice uses “Pastoral Care Committee” for the committee in a local Friends group that has responsibility for memorials, memberships, etc.
of conversation, may serve as guidelines for the committee. The questions are not meant as an examination nor is it expected that there are “right” or “wrong” answers. Their value lies in what they may reveal of the experience of both the counseling Friends and the applicant in seeking and discovering Truth. Sufficient time is allowed to ensure mutual understanding and trust. The visits take place in the spirit of a common search.

This chapter gives an extensive list of topics that the applicant and Clearness Committee may wish to discuss. Some topics may be covered in more depth, others in less. The discussion can be adapted for different circumstances, as appropriate: for example, for a young person who has grown up in the meeting. In most cases, the applicant’s developing relationship to the meeting and the Religious Society of Friends will warrant the most attention.

1. **Motive for applying:** The applicant is naturally interested in this subject and may wish to speak at length about it. Pursuing its implications may take some time, and this is taken into consideration as plans are made for the visit(s). It is helpful to look both at the long-range and more immediate reasons for the application.

2. **Responsibilities of membership:** Membership is a mutual relationship that involves both spiritual and practical considerations. The applicant is brought to understand the importance to the member and to the meeting of regular and prompt attendance at meetings for worship and business. It is essential to discuss the applicant’s potential contributions to the quality of the silence, the spoken ministry, and the work of the meeting. The applicant will also understand that a member is expected to support the meeting financially when possible.

3. **Membership of children:** Older children may apply for full membership. The committee encourages questions from children who wonder about the Religious Society of Friends, offers information, and assures them of the meeting’s love and concern. Some meetings record junior memberships, and an applicant with children under 16 may request
junior membership for them. (See “Children, Youth, and Membership,” below.)

4. **Spiritual and theological matters:** The applicant is reminded of Friends emphasis on personal experience, rather than on formal creeds. This concept may become clear after discussion of the prospective member’s own spiritual experience. The applicant needs to be aware that Friends meeting for worship is more than a collection of people independently meditating and seeking their own “light within.” The Light – whether spoken of as the Inner or Inward Light or as the Light of Christ – is a mystical experience of direct communion with God, available to each person – not possessed by them but rather shared by them. The Light may inwardly illuminate each person so that they are led in spiritual ways and are seen by others as faithfully following that Guide. Since this experience is hard to describe, it may be expressed differently by different Friends, yet it is ultimately the same. Discussion during the visits will reveal the applicant’s degree of comfort with the varied theological perceptions among Friends.

5. **Friends practices:** The committee ensures that the applicant is familiar with Friends literature, such as Howard Brinton’s *A Guide to Quaker Practice* and *Friends for 350 Years* and the writings of other Friends (see Bibliography). These will help the applicant understand the spirit behind the practice of unprogrammed worship, the absence of a paid ministry, the conduct of marriage and memorial services, and the absence of outward sacraments. Special attention is given to the decision-making process and the importance of the Spirit in meetings for business.

6. **Friends testimonies:** The committee discusses with the applicant the role of the Quaker testimonies in his life. “For Friends the most important consideration is not the right action in itself but a right inward state out of which right action will arise. Given the right inward state, right action is inevitable. Inward state and outward action are component parts of a single whole” (Howard Brinton, 1943). (See Chapter 4, “Friends Testimonies”.)
7. **Relationship to other friends:** Becoming a member of a monthly meeting means becoming a member of the whole Religious Society of Friends. The committee clarifies the relationships among monthly, quarterly, and yearly meetings and describes the other Quaker meetings in the area and elsewhere, and how North Pacific Yearly Meeting relates to them. Such consideration might lead to a discussion of Friends organizations, study centers, schools, publications, and internet resources.

8. **Relationship to Christianity and other religions:** The applicant will recognize the historic basis of the Religious Society of Friends in Christianity, as well as the significant place of Jesus and the Bible in the spiritual life of many Friends. Likewise it is important to understand that there are Friends who sometimes find traditional Christian language difficult and those who find spiritual meaning and inspiration from non-Christian sources. The committee and the applicant discuss attitudes toward other Christians and other religions.

9. **Membership and personal problems:** The applicant may bring up past or present actions, involvements, or obligations which may make particular demands upon the meeting. The Clearness Committee encourages frank discussion of any burdens the applicant may be carrying, pointing out the meeting’s resources and the limitations in helping with these problems.

10. **Education:** The committee asks what aspects of Quaker faith and practice the applicant is led to learn more about, and describes the meeting’s resources for the lifelong spiritual growth of members of all ages, with particular care and responsibility for the nurture of children.

11. **Membership procedure:** The committee makes certain that the applicant understands the procedure the meeting will follow in acting on the application for membership.

Clearness Committee discernment is not easy. It is sometimes the committee’s work to discern whether delaying or declining membership will be necessary. If the Clearness Committee feels the applicant is not yet ready for membership, it encourages a
wider exposure to Friends beliefs and practices. It may recommend a further period of regular attendance, suggest that the applicant discuss Quakerism with more members of the meeting, and arrange additional visits with the applicant. The Pastoral Care Committee is kept informed and does not forward the application to the meeting for business until this is recommended by the Clearness Committee. There may be times when, during this further exploration, it becomes clear to either the applicant or the Clearness Committee that membership is not advisable. In this case, the applicant can withdraw the request for membership or the Clearness Committee can recommend to the Pastoral Care Committee that the request be set aside.

The Clearness Committee reports to the Pastoral Care Committee about its meetings with the applicant. If the Clearness Committee recommends going forward and the Pastoral Care Committee is satisfied with the applicant’s sincerity and readiness to become a Friend, it recommends to the meeting for business that the applicant be accepted into membership. Final action on the recommendation is delayed until the next meeting for business to allow Friends and the prospective member to become better acquainted with each other and to give Friends who have questions or reservations about the applicant an opportunity to explore these with the Pastoral Care Committee.

In some meetings, it is customary for an applicant to withdraw from the meeting for business during deliberations about their membership. A member of the Pastoral Care Committee who did not serve on the Clearness Committee accompanies the applicant out of the room at this time.

At the time when the Pastoral Care Committee takes an application to the monthly meeting, if there are Friends with reservations and the meeting does not feel able to accept the recommendation of the Pastoral Care Committee, the application is returned to that committee. The Pastoral Care Committee contacts the applicant about the delay, consults with the Friends who have reservations, and explores ways of resolving the situation. It may then decide to recommend that the monthly meeting accept the application or that the applicant withdraw the request for membership.
Upon approval of the application, the meeting minutes its acceptance of the new member, appoints a committee of two or more to provide a warm welcome into the meeting fellowship, and arranges for the completion and filing of the membership record (see Appendix of Forms). The welcoming visit also gives the new member an opportunity to ask questions which may have occurred to him after he met with the Clearness Committee. The Welcoming Committee is often responsible for arranging for a Quaker book or periodical as the meeting’s welcoming gift; it reports to the meeting when its assignment has been completed.

**Applicants from Preparative Meetings and Worship Groups**

To the extent possible, the usual procedure for applications for membership is followed when the application is from an attender of a preparative meeting or a worship group under the care of a monthly or quarterly meeting. This process may be modified when the local group is a considerable distance from the sponsoring meeting. The application can be an occasion for fellowship between the two groups.

In the early development of a local group, most of the responsibility for membership applications lies with the sponsoring meeting. As the group grows and when it has several attenders who are members of the Religious Society of Friends, the degree of its responsibility will increase in all matters. (See Chapter 6, “New Gatherings of Friends.”) Communication and consultation between the two groups is vital. The application process is as follows.

1. The attender of the local group sends a letter of application to the clerk of the sponsoring meeting, also informing the appropriate person in the local group. The clerk of the sponsoring meeting acknowledges the letter promptly and gives it to the Pastoral Care Committee.

2. The Pastoral Care Committee appoints a Clearness Committee of two or more members of the sponsoring meeting and one or more members from the local group. It
is important that this committee arrange sufficient time for a satisfactory visit with the applicant, even though it may not be immediately possible. The Clearness Committee keeps in mind the several possibilities for meeting with an applicant other than a visit arranged solely for that purpose: at the Annual Session of yearly meeting, at a quarterly meeting, during a visit of the committee sponsoring the local group, or when the applicant is in the area of the sponsoring meeting. Correspondence and telecommunications can also have a role in the process. The committee consults with the local group as well as with the applicant in determining the readiness of both for this membership, before reporting back to the Pastoral Care Committee.

3. When a membership is accepted, in the manner described above, a monthly meeting records it; the new member then bears some responsibility to that meeting. Since only a few members within the monthly meeting may know the new member, it is important for it to have faith in the wisdom of the Clearness Committee and the local group for their part in the process.

4. The clerk of the monthly meeting promptly notifies the new member and the appropriate clerk or convener of the local group regarding the action of the meeting. Cooperation of the local group may be solicited in providing a suitable welcome to the new member.

As a preparative meeting grows and approaches monthly meeting status, the Pastoral Care Committee of the sponsoring meeting may ask the Pastoral Care Committee of the preparative meeting to deal with membership applications (appointing the Clearness Committee, etc.) and to report to it when the time comes to bring the application to the monthly meeting for acceptance.

**Children, Youth, and Membership**

Monthly meetings are committed to nurturing all the children in our fellowship, who from birth are considered our responsibility and under our care. Children and youth have a particular claim
upon the meeting, which earnestly seeks their spiritual well-being and development. Our yearly meeting does not have “birthright membership,” since we affirm that children and youth are able to make personal choices about their religious life upon reaching maturity.

**Junior Membership.** In some monthly meetings, youth under 16 may be recorded as “junior members” upon written request from their parents or guardians, if one or both are members of the Religious Society of Friends. The meeting records its acceptance in the minutes. The monthly meeting determines the duration of junior membership. A junior member may apply for regular membership at any time. (Junior members should not be confused with Junior Friends, who are young people of high-school age. See Chapter 8, “The Yearly Meeting,” for the age-group definitions NPYM uses.)

**Membership.** Any young person approaching maturity may request membership at any time. Friends in the meeting welcome these applications for membership. As young people mature, the question of membership in the monthly meeting may become difficult. Some young people might be offended if asked to apply for membership in a meeting they have always attended, others might be offended if the meeting does not ask them. The Pastoral Care Committee has a continuing responsibility to stay in contact with all the youth of the meeting and, when the youth seem ready, to approach them tenderly. The meeting considers such requests according to the usual procedures, adapting the Clearness Committee topics for each young person’s particular situation.

As youth move into adult lives, the Pastoral Care Committee and others stay in touch with them to assure them of the meeting’s continuing care and interest and to clarify their relationship with the meeting. If young people reach adulthood and have not indicated a desire for membership, the meeting asks them whether they would like to remain listed as attenders in the meeting’s directory.
Transfer of Membership

All meetings need a functioning membership and all members need an available meeting. When a member moves, they may ask the Pastoral Care Committee of the meeting they have been attending to write a letter of introduction to the clerk of the new meeting. As soon as the person feels comfortable in the new meeting, they send a request for a Certificate of Transfer to the clerk of the old monthly meeting. At the same time they inform the clerk of the new meeting that they have requested a transfer. Membership in two monthly meetings is discouraged because it suggests divided interest. Since membership in one monthly meeting includes membership in the whole Religious Society of Friends, transfer of membership is usually a relatively easy matter which offers an opportunity for the new meeting to get to know the new member well.

When the clerk of the member’s old meeting receives a request for transfer, it is given to that meeting’s Pastoral Care Committee which, if everything is in order, recommends approval to the meeting for business. Following meeting approval, the clerk of the old meeting prepares a certificate of transfer and sends it, with a copy of the meeting membership record or similar information, to the clerk of the new meeting. (See Appendix of Forms.) The latter acknowledges receipt of the documents and gives them to the new meeting’s Pastoral Care Committee. As soon as it knows about the request for transfer, the new meeting’s Pastoral Care Committee appoints a small committee to visit the Friend or family of Friends. At least one member of this Visiting Committee is a member of the Pastoral Care Committee. The Visiting Committee makes certain that the transferring Friend has become acquainted with the new meeting and feels comfortable with any differences between the two meetings.

Meetings can vary considerably and may interpret what membership means slightly differently, observing the general guidelines provided in our Faith and Practice. Should the Visiting Committee have grounds for serious question about accepting the transfer, consultation between the Pastoral Care Committees of both meetings is in order, after which, if there remains serious
objection, the new meeting returns the certificate of transfer to the old meeting, explaining its basis for this action.

When the Visiting Committee reports that it finds no obstruction, the Pastoral Care Committee recommends that the monthly meeting accept the certificate of transfer. If the meeting for business approves, it records the Friend as a member without additional waiting. The clerk furnishes the member with a copy of the approving minute and sends an acceptance of transfer (see Appendix of Forms for an example) to the member’s former meeting, where the membership has remained in the interim. The new monthly meeting appoints one or more Friends to visit the new member and provide a warm welcome. If there are objections to the transfer and the meeting is unable to go forward with approval, the procedure outlined under “Admission to Membership” is followed.

An applicant for membership who presents a transfer or letter of recommendation from another religious body also includes a personal letter stating why they wish to become a Friend. Both of these documents are referred to the Pastoral Care Committee, which sends acknowledgment of the communications to the individual and to the other religious body and then follows the usual procedure for admission to membership. When the applicant has been accepted by the monthly meeting, the clerk notifies the other denomination of this action.

When a Friend requests a transfer of membership to some other religious denomination, the procedure outlined under “Resignation or Termination of Membership” is followed.

**Remote Friends and Membership**

When Friends who have lived close to a monthly meeting move and find themselves at such a distance from the nearest meeting that active participation is not practical, they typically continue to hold their membership in their original meeting. They can maintain contact with Friends by participating in quarterly and yearly meeting activities, staying in touch with the NPYM Outreach and Visitation Committee, joining in online Quaker discussions,
and corresponding with the Wider Quaker Fellowship, a program of the Friends World Committee for Consultation. Remote Friends may also be able to help create a new worship group in their community (see Chapter 6, “New Gatherings of Friends”). Quarterly meetings have considered holding membership for remote Friends.

**Remote Applicants.** Individuals who are interested in membership but have no regular contact with a Friends group are encouraged to follow the usual application procedure and send their letter of application to one of the monthly meetings nearest them.

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**Sojourning Membership**

It is generally best for a Friend and for the Society if membership is in the meeting near their place of residence. Members who expect to stay in the area of another meeting for a defined period of time, so that a transfer is not appropriate, are encouraged to write a letter to the clerk of their home meeting requesting a minute of sojourn. If the meeting is clear that this request is in order, it prepares the minute and the clerk sends it to the meeting specified, with a copy to the Friend.

The clerk of the meeting receiving such a minute of sojourn acknowledges it promptly and presents it to the monthly meeting, which, unless some objection appears, accepts it and welcomes the Friend into the fellowship of the meeting. This action is reported to the home meeting. Sojourning members are considered fully participating members and may serve the meeting in whatever ways are fitting. The sojourning Friend’s primary financial responsibility and membership records remain with the home meeting.

A sojourning membership closes when the Friend leaves the area of the meeting, at which time the clerk notifies the home meeting by returning the minute of sojourn with a brief message about the sojourning Friend’s stay.


**Resignation or Termination of Membership**

A monthly meeting may release a Friend from membership by action minuted at a meeting for business. Release from membership may occur either when a Friend resigns or when the monthly meeting initiates action to terminate the membership. Meetings consider seriously whether to initiate the termination of a membership. Attempts to contact and discuss outstanding issues with the member are essential. Meeting preserves confidentiality throughout the process. The meeting understands that some Friends may go through periods, sometimes prolonged, when their association with the life of the meeting is tenuous; however, continuing membership on the basis of nostalgia or status alone is not appropriate.

Meetings keep copies of all letters and other documents relating to resignations and terminations (including postal receipts and any mailings returned “addressee unknown”) in the membership records.

**Resignation**

When a member is no longer in unity with the beliefs and practices of Friends, they may consult with the Pastoral Care Committee, or with others in the meeting in whom they have trust and confidence, to discern a way forward. If the lack of unity appears permanent, they write a letter to the clerk of the monthly meeting asking to be released from membership.

The clerk who receives such a letter of resignation gives it to the Pastoral Care Committee. After discernment, that committee may appoint a committee of two or three persons, including one of its members, to visit the Friend in loving concern and to inquire more deeply into the reasons for the resignation. If fitting, the Friend is encouraged to reconsider the request and to continue in the fellowship of the meeting. If the member’s intention remains unchanged, this is reported to the Pastoral Care Committee, which in turn recommends to the meeting for business that it grant the request for release. The meeting minutes the release of
the Friend, stating that it is at the member’s request. The clerk of the meeting sends a letter to the resigning member, by mail with return receipt requested. The letter includes a copy of the meeting minute which states that the individual is no longer a member of the Religious Society of Friends and expresses the affectionate regard of the meeting. The meeting remains open to renewed application from this person, which it would handle according to the usual procedure for new members.

When the circumstances regarding the resignation and the person are already well known to the Pastoral Care Committee and they are satisfied that the member’s decision is clear, the committee may make its recommendation to the monthly meeting without the appointment of a Visiting Committee.

If a member wishes to resign in order to join another religious body, the monthly meeting grants the request with a minute stating that the individual has been released from the Religious Society of Friends. The clerk notifies the individual in writing of the meeting’s action and writes an appropriate letter to the religious body named by the applicant, by mail with return receipt requested.

**Termination**

A monthly meeting may initiate the release from membership if the member shows no interest in the Religious Society of Friends over a prolonged period or exhibits repeated disregard of Friends principles.

If a Friend shows neither interest in the Religious Society of Friends nor concern for the responsibilities of membership, they are contacted by a member of the Pastoral Care Committee or by a small committee, usually of its members, either by a visit or by correspondence. The purpose of this communication is to clarify the relationship between the member and the Society. The meeting may attempt to restore the member’s interest in the Society. This process may require an extended period of time and tenderness to the specific circumstances. If continued efforts for five or more
years are of no avail, the Pastoral Care Committee notifies the member of its intention to recommend to the monthly meeting at a specified meeting for business that the individual’s membership be terminated. If the meeting concurs with the recommendation, it minutes the circumstances and records the termination of the membership. The clerk of the meeting promptly sends a kindly written notice of this action to the individual, by mail with return receipt requested.

When the address of a member has been unknown for five or more years and continued efforts of the Pastoral Care Committee to locate the member are fruitless, the committee recommends that the meeting drop the individual from its membership roll and the meeting minutes such action.

When a Friend by conduct or publicly expressed views appears to be denying the beliefs and principles of the Religious Society of Friends or to be misrepresenting Friends, so that the meeting or its undertakings are being harmed by the person’s membership, the Pastoral Care Committee appoints a small committee of its members to meet with the Friend. In a spirit of loving concern this committee counsels with the member, seeking to understand the member’s views and actions and endeavoring to effect a change in the relationship with the meeting.

If there appears to be no hope of restoring unity between the member and the meeting, and the member does not resign, the Pastoral Care Committee reports that to the meeting for business and recommends release from membership. The meeting may wish to appoint a special committee to confer further with the Friend before taking action. If there is still no realistic hope of reconciliation, the meeting notifies the member in writing of its intention to consider release from membership at a specified meeting for business. If the meeting agrees that the membership should be terminated, it minutes that decision. The clerk notifies the individual of the action by mail with return receipt requested.

In any consideration of termination of membership, if there are problems which do not seem resolvable at the monthly
meeting level, the individual or the meeting may approach the quarterly meeting Committee on Ministry & Oversight or Ministry & Counsel for help. In all cases, the meeting and individuals concerned should seek constantly to act in a spirit of continuing love.

Kathy Cope
San Juan Worship Group
Elizabeth Bonn-Zimmerman
Lower Columbia Worship Group
Marriage and Committed Relationships

...That as many as are moved of the Lord in his light to take a brother or a sister in marriage, marriage being honourable in all, and the bed undefiled, let it be made known to the children of light, especially to those of the meeting of which the parties are members: that all in the light may it witness to be of God. And being by the light made manifest to be of God let them be joined together in the Lord ... in the presence of many witnesses; according to the example of the holy men of God in the Scriptures of truth recorded, which were written for our example and learning; that no scandal may rest upon the truth, nor anything be done in secret; but all things brought to the light that truth may trample over all deceit, and that they who are joined together in the Lord, may not by man be put asunder, whom God hath joined together.

Epistle from the Elders at Balby, 1656

Marriages and committed relationships pass through many phases, and through all phases the quality of the relationship is tested. The development of a relationship is a growing experience. Respect for each other and enduring, loving expression deepen the bond. With God’s help, each couple finds a true path and a way of living that leads to a strong union. Yet, whatever the style of life, all relationships need a foundation of commitment, communication, honesty, and integrity. Patience, humor and a spirit of adventure, guided by a mutual trust in God’s presence, strengthen the present and brighten the hope for the future.

Pacific Yearly Meeting, 1985 (adapted)

For over 300 years the Religious Society of Friends has struggled to understand and testify to our belief in basic human rights. We affirm again that there is
that of God in every person. We are reminded that “God is love, and those who abide in love abide in God and God abides in them” (1 John 4:16). We find that the Spirit of God is present in all loving relationships, regardless of the genders of those involved. …

Therefore, North Pacific Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends endorses efforts to protect the civil rights of all persons regardless of their sexual orientation. Our love and support is for all persons and is not based upon the gender of the person they love.

North Pacific Yearly Meeting, minute approved at Annual Session, 1992

Our spiritual journey can be enriched and strengthened in a loving, committed relationship. Friends have long recognized that some couples are called into a covenant relationship, a ministry of caring, which with divine assistance may open the door to deep and unreserved love, to forgiveness, to sharing strengths, to trust, and to the nurture of each other’s growth.

Early Friends recognized that the joining of two people in such a covenant relationship is the work of the Lord only, and not the priests or magistrates; for it is God’s ordinance and not man’s; and therefore Friends cannot consent that they should join them together: for we marry none; it is the Lord’s work, and we are but witnesses.

George Fox, 1669

When two people feel called into such a covenant relationship and aspire to a lifetime commitment to each other, they seek clearness with their meeting. When the meeting finds clearness – in the couple, and within the meeting – to take their relationship under its care, the couple publicly affirms and celebrates their commitment to one another in a meeting for worship. The couple chooses what to call their relationship.

**Coming Under the Care of the Meeting**

Couples need an established relationship with the meeting to come under its care. When a new commitment is formed, a meeting,
through a Clearness Committee, counsels with the partners, seeking to establish their clearness in what they are undertaking. If the committee so recommends, and the meeting agrees, the relationship and couple are taken under the care of the meeting. This includes a meeting for worship at which the couple states their intentions, the meeting witnessing this, and a celebration to mark the occasion. The care of the meeting means that the couple is surrounded by a loving community which may take action as necessary to support the well-being of the two individuals, of the relationship itself, and of any children involved. The meeting offers this care in the form of support and guidance to every couple in the meeting.

When a couple unknown to the meeting community request a “Quaker wedding” they may be allowed to rent the meetinghouse and can be instructed in how a wedding after the manner of Friends is conducted. However, for the meeting to take a committed relationship or marriage under its care, at least one of the two individuals is currently a member or a regular attender of the meeting.

**Clearness Process**

**Request**

When two people wish to have their covenant relationship taken under the care of the monthly meeting, they write a letter to the meeting, in care of the clerk, stating their intention and requesting the meeting to begin the clearness process. In the good order of Friends it is expected that a minimum of three months will be needed between the sending of the request and the desired date of the celebration.

**Clearness Committee**

When the couple requests that their commitment be taken under the care of the meeting, the Pastoral Care Committee\(^1\) or the

\(^1\) “The Oversight Committee” is a traditional Quaker name for the committee that organizes memorials, handles requests for membership
meeting appoints a Clearness Committee. It is important that members asked to serve be free of time constraints, be open to prayerful consideration regarding the right course of action, and be individuals well-versed in Friends practice.

The couple and the Clearness Committee meet together and separately for thoughtful and prayerful discussions to seek divine guidance regarding the proposed celebration. The committee or the couple may present specific queries or topics to give direction to the discussions, or discussion may arise out of worship. It is important that those participating in the clearness process approach each meeting with open hearts and minds, that sufficient time be allotted for thorough understanding and seasoning to occur, and that any encumbrance be explored to ensure that all parties are free of conflicting obligations. The committee’s job is to help the couple take stock of the breadth and depth of their commitment and prepare for a shared lifetime together, including times both difficult and joyous.

It is well for the committee to have topics in mind and to see that they are covered. Most of these subjects will arise naturally in the course of the interviews, and it is preferable that the prospective partners feel free to broach them themselves.

1. **Background and acquaintance.** How well do the partners know each other? What are their basic common values? How do they adapt to differences in background, religion, temperament, and interests? Are they willing to listen deeply and respectfully

or marriage under the care of the meeting, and coordinates help and comfort for Friends in need. In many meetings this function is combined with care for the community’s spiritual life, hence the common name “Ministry & Oversight Committee” – the name used by NPYM and its quarterly meetings. However, “oversight” has connotations of slavery for many Friends, and they may use some other name in their meetings, such as Ministry & Counsel for a combined committee. Each Friends group names its committees in its own way. Reflecting the concern about “oversight,” this *Faith and Practice* uses “Pastoral Care Committee” for the committee in a local Friends group that has responsibility for memorials, memberships, etc.
to each other? Can they meet their differences with humor, mutual respect, patience, and generosity? Do they have the courage and the willingness to go together for outside guidance with any problem they are unable to solve?

2. Religious beliefs, feelings, aspirations. Do they see commitment or marriage as a spiritual relationship to be entered into with appreciation of its divine basis? How do they propose to meet their religious needs as a couple? How do they plan to make their relationship accessible to divine assistance? How do they endeavor to hold each other in the Light?

3. Growth and fulfillment. Do they think of themselves as trusted and equal partners, sharing responsibilities and decisions? In what ways are they supportive of each other’s goals for personal growth and fulfillment? How do they communicate their feelings and needs, their dreams and fears to each other? Are they able to discuss their expectations of the intimate life they will share together?

4. Daily living. How do they discuss and work through questions regarding the use and management of money? How will they resolve minor daily issues such as who takes out the trash or does the dishes? How do they deal with anger when it arises within the relationship? What ways have they found to resolve lifestyle issues, such as one being a morning person and one being an evening person, so that neither feels personally rejected? Have they explored attitudes towards holidays and gift-giving? Have they discussed the last names each will use?

5. Remarriage. A new marriage or committed relationship following the loss of a partner takes much faith, strength, and courage. Remarriage will raise questions for the couple such as: Has a suitable period of time elapsed to establish the new relationship? Are the circumstances of the new relationship likely to make it successful and fruitful in spiritual happiness? Will the current and former partner have any interactions with each other – and if so, how is their relationship with each other? What consideration have they given to assuring the welfare and legal rights of all the children involved?
Can the children be involved in the clearness process? If the new relationship involves blending a family, has the couple given thorough and prayerful consideration to the new family structure?

6. Relationships with others. Are they aware of the need for developing a variety of other friendships that contribute both to individual growth and to their relationship? Have they considered together whether or not they desire children: the challenges as well as the joys children would bring, and the responsibilities for nurturing, guiding, and disciplining them? How do they view their relationships with each other’s families and their obligations toward society?

7. Relationship with the monthly meeting. What does the couple expect the monthly meeting to do to support their relationship? Are there other religious group memberships?

8. Prior commitments. Do they have obligations, personal or financial, which need to be met or discharged? If one of the partners holds membership in another monthly meeting, the Clearness Committee should consult with that meeting.

9. Attitude of families. What are the views of their families toward the prospective marriage or commitment? Are there any family problems that may affect the couple’s relationship? How might the couple address them?

10. Timing. Is this an appropriate time in each partner’s life to undertake the new responsibilities and other changes that would result from a formal commitment to one another?

11. The celebration. How do they view the meeting for worship on the occasion of marriage or celebration which is to take place under the care of the meeting? Are they familiar with the procedure? Do they appreciate the values involved in the Quaker form of commitment?

When the couple and the committee are clear to recommend that the meeting take the couple under its care, the Clearness Committee reports its endorsement to the Pastoral Care Committee, which carries it to the monthly meeting, indicating
that unity has been found. The monthly meeting accepts the report for consideration and seasoning and, when it is able to unite in approving the request, appoints an ad hoc Arrangements Committee for the celebration, guided by the couple's wishes. The Arrangements Committee and the couple set a time and a place for the called meeting for worship to celebrate the commitment.

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**Steps and Timeline for Taking a Relationship under the Care of the Meeting**

A marriage or committed relationship is taken under the care of a monthly meeting by these steps.

A meeting needs at least three months to take a marriage or committed relationship under its care.

1. The couple writes to the clerk of the meeting stating their intent and requesting that their marriage or relationship be taken under the care of the meeting.

2. The request is referred to the Pastoral Care Committee which appoints a Clearness Committee.

3. The Clearness Committee meets with the couple, in some cases several times.

4. When the committee and the couple are clear, the Clearness Committee reports to the Pastoral Care Committee that there is unity in the matter.

5. The Pastoral Care Committee carries the recommendation to the monthly meeting for business.

6. The monthly meeting accepts the report and allows at least a month for seasoning.

7. When the meeting approves taking the marriage under its care, it appoints an Arrangements Committee which assists in organizing the celebration of the marriage or committed relationship.

8. A called meeting for worship is the usual occasion for the couple to marry each other.
It may be that unity to move forward is not readily found. The committee and the couple may choose to continue seeking God’s will in this matter, or they may choose to lay aside the request indefinitely or permanently. When the right course of action is clear, the Clearness Committee reports that to the Pastoral Care Committee.

**Arrangements Committee**

This committee, appointed by the monthly meeting, works with the couple to ensure that the couple’s desires are met regarding the meeting for worship in celebration of the couple’s commitment to one another and that it is accomplished with simplicity, dignity, and reverence. The reception, if any, is also part of the committee’s responsibility.

Marriage after the manner of Friends entails two documents. One is the Quaker certificate, the other the state’s certificate. Couples who meet their state’s legal marriage requirements may wish to have their marriage legally recognized. If they do, it is their responsibility to acquire the marriage license; the Arrangements Committee arranges for the signature (usually of the clerk of the meeting) on the state’s certificate of marriage and files it with the county. The state recognizes the couple as legally married when the certificate of marriage is signed and filed. The committee and the couple may be led to alter the state certificate, with appropriate legal advice, to reflect the actual practice of Friends.

**Meeting to Celebrate Commitment**

The meeting for worship for the celebration gathers in silence at the appointed time. A description of marriage after the manner of Friends and of customary speech during the wedding is provided in the invitations and early in the meeting. During worship the couple will rise, take each other by the hand, and each, speaking in turn, declare in words such as:

*In the presence of God, and before these our Friends, I take thee________________, to be my (wife/husband/partner), promising, with divine assistance, to be unto thee a loving and faithful (husband/wife/partner), as long as we both shall live.*
Or

_In the presence of God, and before these our Friends, I commit myself to you, __________, endeavoring, with divine assistance, to be a loving and faithful (husband/wife/partner)._ 

The couple is joined together by their vows; the meeting and all at the ceremony are the witnesses. Worship continues, often with rich vocal ministry, and is closed by the Arrangements Committee, or other Friends approved by them.

Traditionally couples sign the Quaker marriage certificate directly after making their vows, attesting to their commitment. It is available for signing by Friends and others attending the meeting at its close. The certificate is usually headed with the vows of the couple’s choosing, and it includes the names of the couple, the date of the meeting for worship, and the fact that the relationship is under the care of the named monthly meeting. Examples of certificates are available from the yearly meeting.

The couple may use variations of these procedures with the approval of their Arrangements Committee.

**Meeting’s Care for the Relationship**

The meeting’s care of a relationship does not end with the celebration. Meetings have an important role in nurturing, supporting, and celebrating all individuals who attend, as well as the couples under their care. In a loving community of persons of similar religious values and priorities, couples can be sustained and guided in their efforts to build an enduring relationship. Meetings may nurture committed relationships in many ways: workshops and supportive discussion groups, celebration of anniversaries, meetings for worship for the renewal of vows, and committees for clearness.

Some meetings offer ongoing care, with the Clearness Committee for marriage becoming a Continuing Care of the Marriage Committee that meets with the couple once a year for reflection on their marriage. The Continuing Care Committee may report
in writing to the Pastoral Care Committee. The couples under continuing care may find that continuing care supports them in their relationship and in their connection to the meeting.

Friends are frequently very private and reluctant to bring forth personal or relationship problems. Nevertheless, each couple must be aware that their committed relationship has far-reaching effects on others, including those in meeting. In taking the couple under its care, the meeting assumes the responsibility to be steadfast and direct, as well as sensitive, in fulfilling its obligation of care, in the hope that the couple is willing to seek divine help and to make use of the assistance the meeting is able to provide. If a couple is in conflict, meeting does not assume that the partners will come to the meeting as a couple to seek assistance, but will offer its assistance. However, neither the meeting nor any committee takes on the role of therapist or psychological counselor.

Queries for Meetings about Nurturing Covenant Relationships

- How does our meeting nurture couples? Do the practices we follow meet the needs of couples in our meeting?
- Does our meeting provide resources that may be helpful to couples on various topics, such as couples’ enrichment and parenting classes, or referrals to trained counselors and therapists, as necessary?
- What informal practices to support couples are encouraged among members and attenders?

Care for Commitments Made Outside the Meeting.
If a member is married or celebrates a commitment outside the care of the meeting, the Pastoral Care Committee arranges for someone to visit with the new couple, expressing the meeting’s care and assuring them that the non-member partner will be made welcome.

When a couple has been married under the care of another meeting, in another religious tradition, or in a civil proceeding,
the partners may ask the Pastoral Care Committee to have their relationship taken under the care of the current meeting. If so, a Clearness Committee can be appointed and the same process of recommendation to the meeting may be followed, with amended queries, and ending with the meeting’s acceptance of the care of the relationship.

We thank God then, for the pleasures, joys and triumphs of [life together]; for the cups of tea we bring each other, and the seedlings in the garden frame; for the domestic drama of meetings and partings, sickness and recovery; for the grace of occasional extravagance, flowers on birthdays and unexpected presents; for talk at evenings of the events of the day; for the ecstasy of caresses; for gay mockery at each other’s follies; for plans and projects, fun and struggle; praying that we may neither neglect nor undervalue these things, nor be tempted to think of them as self-contained and self-sufficient.

London Yearly Meeting, 1960

Renewal of Vows

A couple joined together outside of the meeting or a couple that has been married for many years may desire to renew their vows in the presence of the Divine and the loving community of their meeting. The couple asks for a Clearness Committee, through the Pastoral Care Committee, to explore the health of their relationship and to chart their future. If the couple and the Clearness Committee reach clarity, they recommend to the Pastoral Care Committee that the couple reaffirm their vows in a called meeting for worship. This celebration is an opportunity for the meeting to express its loving support of the couple.

Separation and Divorce

“If someone from my meeting had just sat with me to hold my separating marriage in the Light for 15 minutes, it would have made all the difference in the world to me.”

A North Pacific Yearly Meeting Friend, 2012
Committed relationships can experience both fulfillment and tension. Whether or not their relationship is formally under the meeting’s care, if a couple encounters difficulties and their relationship is under strain, they are encouraged to seek assistance through the Pastoral Care Committee. Meetings wisely exercise caution in providing such assistance. Individuals and committees in meetings rarely possess the training and expertise necessary to counsel couples in conflict in areas of psychology and the law. The Pastoral Care Committee may refer the couple to a qualified counselor. Meetings understand that emotions during such intimate conflict may be powerful and destructive, both to the individuals and to the meeting. Some couples do not want the meeting involved in their conflict; the meeting recognizes and honors that wish. Meetings are advised not to take sides in the separation and to avoid the enforcement or management of legal no-contact orders.

No marriage or committed relationship should be terminated lightly or quickly. If, after thoughtful and prayerful consideration and a period of seasoning, the couple finds that serious contemplation of separation or divorce is advisable, they are encouraged to seek further clearness through the Pastoral Care Committee. If the couple requests a Clearness Committee, either as a couple or as individuals, the meeting provides it, recognizing that such a committee can provide spiritual guidance, but not psychological or legal consultation. The Clearness Committee meets to foster compassionate communication so that the couple’s decisions can be made in a spirit of forgiveness. It is generally preferable to have one Clearness Committee for the couple. When it proves necessary to have a separate committee for each partner, the two committees work together closely and may meet jointly at intervals to maintain communication. The Clearness Committee members are not marriage counselors or problem solvers; instead, they offer to walk on a painful journey with the family, reminding them to seek God’s assistance with every step.

A dissolution moves forward when it is clear that the marriage or committed relationship no longer exists.
When there is an abusive relationship, immediate separation may be necessary to protect all those involved from further harm.

When children are involved, the meeting should remember their enduring need for love and security, both at home and in the meeting community, and take care to protect them so that they are not turned against either parent.

When both individuals in the separating or divorcing couple are active in the same meeting, one or both may feel alienated from further participation there. If the meeting has taken an active role in the clearness process, the sense of alienation may be lessened and separation may proceed with tenderness and charity. All in the meeting are lovingly advised to answer that of God in both individuals. When an individual is going through a painful divorce, sometimes a word spoken in love will make a tremendous difference. The meeting community may have its own sense of failure and loss to work through.

We would counsel Friends to take timely advice in periods of difficulty. The early sharing of problems with sympathetic Friends or marriage counsellors can often bring release from misunderstandings and give positive help towards new joy together. Friends ought to be able to do this, but much will depend on the quality of our life together in the Society. If marriages among us fail, we are all part of that failure. We need to be more sensitive to each other’s needs, knowing one another in the things which are material as in the things which are eternal.

London Yearly Meeting Marriage & Parenthood Committee, 1956
Chapter 11

Death and Memorials

Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

Matthew 5:4

Now I am clear, I am fully clear!

From George Fox’s last words, 1/13/1691

They that love beyond the World cannot be separated by it. Death cannot kill what never dies. Nor can Spirits ever be divided that love and live in the same Divine Principle.... They live in one another still.

William Penn, 1693

Eternity is at our hearts, pressing upon our time-worn lives, warming us with intimations of an astounding destiny, calling us home to Itself.

Thomas Kelly, 1941

A Friends’ memorial meeting for worship is a beautiful ritual, in its celebration of the life of the person who has died. But an elderly Friend in our meeting once expressed concern after a memorial that we had only spoken of the person’s life, not of their dying and death.

Part of the beauty of a memorial meeting is that it allows for not only memories and recollections, but for the immediate and continuing experience of deep connection with the person who has died, and shared connections among those who loved that person. In a sense, our memorial meetings are held for “that of God” in the dead person, and held by and with “that of God” in each of us. Therefore, the Friend who reminded us to acknowledge dying and death along with life was reminding us that “that of God” was present not
only in the active life of this individual in the world, but also in her essential, stripped-down presence as she died.

*Kirsten Backstrom, 2001*

Death often faces us with the most difficult of questions, yet it may be the occasion of our most profound insights into the meaning of life. As Friends seek to surround the bereaved with love and care, the sustaining power of God can bring to all concerned not only courage but a transforming truth about death and life itself. Although life instinctively avoids death, death is not the opposite of life. It is essential to the ongoing, changing nature of life.

See “The Meeting and Friends of All Ages” in Chapter 4, “Friends Testimonies,” for discussion of the spiritual and community aspects of death and bereavement.

**Preparing for Death**

*Individual Friends’ Responsibilities.* Knowing that significant disability or death may come at any time, adult Friends take care to make and communicate health care and end-of-life decisions. Friends prepare their wills and other documents concerned with end-of-life planning—such as trusts, health care power of attorney, financial power of attorney, and POLST (Physicians Orders for Life Sustaining Treatment) forms—in a timely way. Friends keep wills current in order to provide properly for members of the family, particularly minor children, and for the stewardship of property. Friends may write a simple will, mindful that it will be most effective if written with the knowledge of applicable law. Will preparation may require the assistance of an attorney. Preparation is particularly important for those with children or those who place themselves at risk for conscience’s sake.

We take care that health care and end-of-life choices are not made under the influence of depression or undue pain. Because medical technology can extend life beyond our wishes, we consider in
advance the ways to prepare ourselves for the end of life. There may come a point when focusing on palliative care is the most compassionate choice. In states that permit it, some Friends may consider whether they wish to implement physician-assisted dying.

Friends consider how we can apply our values when preparing for the end of life. For example, there may be questions about how and when to move from independent living to assisted living, to skilled nursing or home care, and perhaps to hospice. Friends may observe our testimonies of simplicity and stewardship by planning for a green burial or a home funeral. We may also wish to be organ donors or donate our bodies to research. Friends who wish to minimize their contribution to military spending by minimizing estate taxes may wish to explore options toward that end with a professional. These are all difficult decisions, to be made under the guidance of the Spirit. Friends may need, and meetings may offer, care committees or clearness committees to aid in making or acting on these decisions.

Many Friends belong to memorial societies which contract with given mortuaries for prompt, simple, and inexpensive disposition of the body, frequently through cremation. The monthly meeting may keep on file, often with membership records, members’ own personal suggestions about arrangements desired at the time of their death, including a list of persons to be notified. A suggested form for this purpose is found in the Appendix of Forms. Friends provide only the information they are comfortable having held by the meeting. Meetings are responsible to remind members to review and update this information every few years.

**The Meeting’s Responsibilities.** When Friends suffer the loss of a loved one, there is a sustaining strength in the loving concern and help of the meeting and its members. Meeting’s role is to support the spiritual journey of the dying Friend and their family, and to assist with after-death arrangements in accord with the Friend’s express wishes and the needs of the family. It is important for the meeting, and especially the Pastoral Care Committee\(^1\) to

\(^{1}\) “The Oversight Committee” is a traditional Quaker name for the committee that organizes memorials, handles requests for membership
be prepared for its responsibilities. The committee works out a general process in advance for dealing with the death of a beloved member. If the dying or deceased Friend plays an important role in the meeting, the committee may recommend how the Friend’s service to meeting will be covered after their passing.

The committee may ask appropriate Friends to visit and counsel with the family or friends of the dying or deceased, to offer any needed assistance, such as notifying relatives and friends, or helping to plan a memorial meeting, and to assist in whatever ways the particular situation suggests. Some meetings form Support Committees to assist families, particularly when a child is involved, or in the case of a suicide. Such a committee may be critical if the Friend has chosen physician-assisted dying.

### Memorial Meetings

The Quaker testimony on simplicity and consideration for the wishes of the family govern the arrangements to be made. Friends generally feel that prompt and simple disposition of the body is appropriate, followed at a suitable time by a memorial meeting held in the regular place of worship or at some other suitable place.

For Friends, a memorial meeting is a meeting for worship on the occasion of death. Such a memorial meeting is approached in a spirit of peace and trust. It is an opportunity to come together or marriage under the care of the meeting, and coordinates help and comfort for Friends in need. In many meetings this function is combined with care for the community’s spiritual life, hence the common name “Ministry & Oversight Committee” —the name used by NPYM and its quarterly meetings. However, “oversight” has connotations of slavery for many Friends, and they may use some other name in their meetings, such as Ministry & Counsel for a combined committee. Each Friends’ group names its committees in its own way. Reflecting the concern about “oversight,” this Faith and Practice uses “Pastoral Care Committee” for the committee in a local Friends group that has responsibility for memorials, memberships, etc.
Planning a Memorial Meeting

Pastoral Care Committee responsibilities:
- Check meeting records for wishes at time of death.
- Name an ad hoc arrangements committee.
- Name member(s) of committee who will meet with the family to:
  - offer condolences and help;
  - discuss wishes for the memorial meeting.
- Update meeting membership files.

The Pastoral Care Committee or an arrangements committee will help the family with the following:

Notifications
- Send obituary to media if desired.
- State where to send donations.
- Write memorial minute; send to family, to NPYM, to Quaker publications if desired.

Logistics
- Plan physical arrangements:
  - location, date, time;
  - expected attendance;
  - room set-up;
  - seating for close family;
  - display tables if desired;
  - parking;
  - equipment if needed;
  - help for guests with special needs;
  - extra chairs if needed.
- Plan child care if needed.
- Plan social gathering & food if desired.
- Designate greeters.
- Designate clean-up help.
- Plan for guest book & pens.
- Plan for flowers if desired (order, placement, what to do with them after the memorial).

Program planning
- Write & produce printed program:
  - order of service, if any;
  - biographical sketch or memorial minute;
  - photograph;
  - description of memorial meeting in the manner of Friends.
- Designate who will open the meeting and introduce Friends practice at memorials.
- Designate who will close meeting.
to celebrate in the Light a life that has held meaning for us, and to support each other in healing our grief. Music or a prepared statement may be used if consistent with the spirit of the meeting and the desire of the family. The use of flowers in such a meeting is much the same as it might be in a meeting for worship. If people other than Friends are expected to be present, it is helpful to have available a prepared statement explaining a Friends memorial meeting. Near its beginning, a selected Friend may talk briefly about the manner of the meeting, and describe how it will close. Some meetings follow the practice of reading a brief biography of the deceased Friend and find that it frequently supplies information and insights of which more recent acquaintances have been unaware, and helps to draw a more complete portrait of the Friend’s life.

In some meetings, Friends may hold a memorial meeting at the death of a public figure, to recognize the effect of a natural disaster, or to acknowledge a public tragedy. Some Friends hold an annual meeting for remembrance to commemorate the passing of loved ones.

**Memorial Minutes**

The Pastoral Care Committee prepares a memorial minute about the deceased member and presents it to an upcoming meeting for business for inclusion in the minutes. Memorial minutes typically include a brief biography (often with special emphasis on the person’s activities among Friends), mention of the surviving family, and the date of the memorial meeting. The clerk or recording clerk sends copies of the memorial minute to the family and to the yearly meeting. Copies of the minute may also be sent to *Western Friend* and other Friends publications.
**Glossary**

*Italics* indicate a term defined elsewhere in the glossary. “Yearly meeting” refers to North Pacific Yearly Meeting unless otherwise indicated.

**Advices** – Statements of the basic faith, principles, and ideals held to be essential to the life and witness of Friends. See also *queries*.

**Affirm** – To declare a commitment to telling the truth; used in legal contexts by Friends who decline to take an oath for reasons of conscience.

**AFSC** – American Friends Service Committee. [www.afsc.org](http://www.afsc.org)

**After the manner of Friends** – Following the practices of Friends.

**Anchor committee** – A *support committee* for a Friend traveling or laboring in the *ministry* which helps them stay spiritually grounded.

**Annual Session** – The *yearly meeting*’s annual gathering for *worship*, business, and fellowship.

**As way opens** – To act after waiting for divine guidance and, as circumstances in the world allow, without hasty judgment or action.

**Attender** – One who attends and participates in meeting activities but does not have formal *membership* in the *Religious Society of Friends*.

**Birthright member** – Someone born of Quaker parents who is recorded at birth on the *membership* rolls of a meeting. North Pacific Yearly Meeting does not practice birthright membership;
all recorded memberships are by convincement. See also convinced Friend.

**Book of discipline** – See discipline.

**Break meeting** – To close the meeting for worship. A designated Friend shakes hands with those nearby, and the others present shake hands with their neighbors. See also rise of meeting.

**Business meeting** – See meeting for business.

**Called meeting** – A special meeting called by the clerk to address a particular concern or item of business. A meeting for worship for marriage or a memorial meeting is also a called meeting.

**Care committee** – A committee convened to support a Friend during a major life transition.

**Care of the meeting** – Exercised by a designated Friend who holds the meeting for worship in prayer and typically initiates the rise of meeting by shaking hands with nearby Friends. The Friend with care of the meeting may also attend to physical arrangements and greet people as they arrive.

**Centering down** – The means by which Friends in meeting for worship open their hearts and minds to the Divine Presence.

**Central Friends** – In NPYM, meeting participants of middle-school age.

**Certificate** – Used to document marriage, transfer of membership, or traveling ministry.

**Christocentric Friends** – Quakers whose faith is centered in the Christ.

**Clearness** – Confidence that an action is consistent with divine will.

**Clearness committee** – A committee appointed to assist a person or the meeting to clarify thinking about a decision such as membership, marriage, or a personal concern.

**Clerk** – (1) The person who facilitates meeting or committee business. See also presiding clerk. (2) To facilitate such business.

**Close meeting** – See break meeting.
Committee – Meetings operate largely through smaller groups committed to a particular focus or task; these groups usually report to the meeting for business.

Concern – An interest deeply rooted in the Holy Spirit; one that can move both the individual and a meeting to action.

Conscientious objection – A principled refusal to participate in certain social or political practices; commonly applied to the refusal to undertake military service.

Consensus – A secular term used to describe unanimous agreement that is reached by a group without a vote after consideration of an issue. In meeting for business, Friends seek unity in the Spirit or the sense of the meeting instead of consensus.

Conservative Friends – Quakers who maintain traditional Friends testimonies and meet in waiting worship (unprogrammed), usually with a strong Christian basis. Not a political description.

Continuing revelation – Friends’ deeply held belief that God speaks to people directly today.

Convener – (1) Member of a committee, usually the first person listed, who is asked to call the first meeting together. (2) The contact person for a worship group.

Convergent Friends – An inclusive coming-together of Friends from many strands of Quakerism, seeking a deeper understanding of our heritage and an authentic life in the Kingdom of God on earth.

Convinced Friend – A person led by the Inward Light to become a Friend after careful study, thought, and inward seeking. In North Pacific Yearly Meeting all membership is by this “convincement.”

Coordinating Committee – Confers about concerns of the yearly meeting and its committees.

Corporate – Refers to the physical and spiritual body of a Friends meeting.

Correspondent – (1) the convener or contact person in a worship group. (2) Someone who serves as an informal liaison with another Quaker organization.

Covered meeting – See gathered meeting.
Discernment – The process of finding the right course of action through spiritual perception and thoughtful consideration.

Discipline – The document describing the faith and practice of the Religious Society of Friends. Each yearly meeting may draw together the collective wisdom of its community, including queries and guidelines to support individual and corporate faithful living. NPYM’s Faith and Practice is a discipline in this sense of the word.

EFI – Evangelical Friends International. www.evangelicalfriends.org

Elder – (as a noun) A Friend (of any age) with a gift of caring for the worship and spiritual life of the meeting and individuals. (as a verb) (1) To encourage diffident or timid Friends to share their gifts with a meeting. (2) To question an individual’s speech or behavior that may be disruptive to the meeting.

Endorse a travel minute – To add a note about the visit of a traveling Friend to the travel minute which the Friend presents from their home meeting. Travel minutes are usually endorsed by the clerk of each meeting or group the Friend visits.

Epistle – (1) A formal letter sent by each yearly meeting to all Friends everywhere, stating the condition and experience of the yearly meeting. (2) A letter of serious import sent by an individual or group to Friends.

Evangelical Friends – Quakers in the pastoral tradition who are especially concerned with church growth and Christian mission.

Executive Committee – The NPYM body made up of the presiding clerk, rising clerk, Coordinating Committee clerk, Ministry & Oversight Committee clerk, treasurer, and Coordinating Committee associate clerk. Other Friends organizations may have a similar committee.

Exercise – A season of profound exploration of a concern. When there is no clarity, a minute of exercise provides the context for resuming discussion at a later point.

Expectant worship – See worship.

Facing benches – Historically, the seats in the front of the meeting room on which recorded ministers and elders sat, facing the body of the meeting. NPYM Friends generally arrange their meeting-room seating in a circle or square with no facing bench distinction.
**Faith and Practice** – See discipline.

**FAP** (pronounced “fapp”) – Friendly Adult Presence. An adult who has been approved to assist with a Central Friends or Junior Friends event.

**FCNL** – Friends Committee on National Legislation. www.fcnl.org

**FCWPP** (pronounced “FICK-wipp”) – Friends Committee on Washington Public Policy. Former name of Quaker Voice on Washington Public Policy. www.fcwpp.org

**FGC** – Friends General Conference. www.fgcquaker.org

**First Day** – Sunday, the first day of the week.

**First-Day school** – Religious education provided on Sunday, usually for children.

**FPT** – Friends Peace Teams. www.friendspeaceteams.org

**Friend** – (1) A recorded member of the Religious Society of Friends. Membership is held in a monthly meeting. (2) May also be used more broadly to refer to both members and attenders.

**Friend speaks my mind** – A way to voice agreement with another person who speaks to an item of business during meeting for business. Usually expressed as “that Friend speaks my mind.”

**Friends Bulletin Corporation** – Publishes Western Friend, a Quaker periodical for Friends within Intermountain, North Pacific, and Pacific Yearly Meetings.

**Friends Journal** – An independent monthly magazine commonly associated with unprogrammed meetings.

**Friends meeting** – See monthly meeting.

**FUM** – Friends United Meeting. www.fum.org

**FWCC** – Friends World Committee for Consultation. www.fwcc.world

**Gathered meeting** – An occasion when meeting for worship attains a perceptible sense of Divine Presence which touches the hearts of worshipers and unites them in a common experience of holy fellowship.
**Good order of Friends** (or simply **good order**) – The procedures for Friends business that facilitate corporate activities as they seek to discern and carry out God’s will. See also **right ordering**.

**Holding in the Light** – A Quaker version of prayer that offers a concern about an individual or a situation to God’s love and guidance.

**Home meeting** – (1) Periodic meetings for worship that take place in a home; they may become the seed for the formation of a worship group. (2) The monthly meeting where a Friend holds membership.

**Independent Friends** – Quakers in a yearly meeting in the U.S. not affiliated with FGC, FUM, or EFI (currently, Pacific Yearly Meeting and North Pacific Yearly Meeting).

**Inward Light** – The presence of God within each person. It differs from conscience or the sense of obligation to do right, although both conscience and the Inward Light are known within. The Inward Light is also called the Inner Light, the Light Within, the Christ Within, the Light of Christ, or the Holy Spirit.

**Isolated Friend** – See **remote Friend**.

**Junior Friend** – In NPYM, meeting participants of high-school age, 9th through 12th grade.

**Junior member** – In some monthly meetings, youth under age 16 who have been recorded on the membership rolls by written request from their parents or guardians.

**Labor with** – To struggle faithfully with a concern or a difficulty over time, working toward a resolution.

**Lay down** – To terminate a committee or activity when its work is completed or no longer felt possible or necessary.

**Leading** – An inner conviction that impels one to follow a certain course under a sense of divine guidance. A Friend may submit a leading to the meeting to be tested by corporate wisdom.

**Letter of introduction** – A letter that a Friend traveling socially or for personal reasons may request from their monthly meeting to affirm their association with Friends.

**Liberal Friends** – Quakers who meet in unprogrammed waiting worship but are not part of the Conservative branch of Friends. Not a political description.
**Liberate** – To set concerned and qualified persons free for religious service such as traveling among Friends. This may include the meeting’s assuming the responsibilities of the *released Friend* in their absence.

**Meeting for business** – The meeting at which Friends attend to *corporate* business, sometimes called “*meeting for worship* with a concern for (or attention to) business.”

**Meeting for healing** – A gathering of Friends to *hold in the Light* the physical, spiritual, and/or psychological brokenness of the participants.

**Meeting for worship** – A gathering of Friends for *unprogrammed* worship held in silence, at established times, and closed by shaking hands. See also *worship*.

**Meetinghouse** – The building where Friends meet to *worship*.

**Membership** – A *corporate* recognition of a person’s *unity* with Friends faith and practice, which is recorded in the *minutes* of a *monthly meeting*.

**Memorial minute** – A brief account of a recently deceased Friend’s life, with particular emphasis on spiritual life and activities among Friends.

**MGOF** (pronounced “muh-GOFF”) – Montana Gathering of Friends, one of the *quarterly meetings* in NPYM. It also functions as a *monthly meeting*.

**Mind the Light** – To pay attention to the *Inward Light*.

**Ministry** – (1) A gift of the Spirit which refers both to *vocal ministry* in *meeting for worship* and to gifts for pastoral care and service. (2) The work of offering those gifts to others.

**Minute** – A statement of an item of business approved by those present at a given *meeting for business*. When *unity* is reached, recorded, and approved, it is said to be “minuted.”

**Minute of exercise** – A statement of where a meeting stands on a question when there is no clarity about the way forward.

**Minute of travel** – See *travel minute*.

**Minutes** – The formal records of business conducted by a meeting, committee, or Friends organization.
**Monthly meeting** – A congregation of Friends who meet regularly for *worship*, usually weekly, and to conduct *corporate* business, traditionally once a month.

**Moved to speak** – The conviction of being led by God to break the silence of the *meeting for worship* with a verbal message, hence also “speaking out of the silence.”

**NPYM** – North Pacific Yearly Meeting. [www.npym.org](http://www.npym.org)

**Opening** – A spiritually affirmed recognition of an opportunity to move forward toward a goal or out of a difficulty; an insight or inspiration from the Divine.

**Outreach** – Presentation of Quaker beliefs and practices to others, invitations to attend Friends functions, and similar activities directed to the community outside the meeting.

**Overseers** – Members of the Committee on Oversight. Because “oversight” has other meanings and “overseer” is associated with slavery, many contemporary Friends use alternative terms such as *Pastoral Care Committee* or Care & Counsel Committee.

**Pacifist** – A person who renounces war, seeks to resolve conflicts peacefully, and works to reduce the conditions that lead to violence or war.

**Pastoral Care Committee** – The committee which has particular care for the *membership* and *corporate* life of the meeting.

**Pastoral Friends** – Quakers in meetings that call Friends with spiritual gifts to minister to them; see also *programmed meeting*.

**Plain dress** – The simple, unadorned garments worn by most Friends until the late nineteenth century and still worn by some today.

**Plain speech** – Historically, Friends used “thee,” “thy,” and “thine” to address others and did not use titles, as an expression of equality. Friends also replaced the pagan-derived names of months and days with numbers, such as First Month for January and First Day for Sunday. Contemporary Friends still avoid using titles such as Mr., Mrs., or Dr. (unless referring to someone who is a medical doctor) and instead address or refer to a person by their first or full name.

**Plenary session** (or simply *plenary*) – A meeting of the whole body, such as at *Annual Session*. 
PNQM – Pacific Northwest Quarterly Meeting, one of the quarterly meetings in NPYM.

Popcorn meeting – A meeting for worship in which many people speak, one after another, leaving insufficient time to consider what has been said.

Preparative meeting – In NPYM, a body of Friends preparing to become a monthly meeting under the care and guidance of an established monthly meeting.

Presiding clerk – The person primarily responsible for facilitating a meeting for business. Often simply referred to as the clerk, especially at the monthly meeting level.

Programmed meeting – A Quaker church service, usually led by a pastor, with a pre-arranged program including sermon, music, an offering, etc. In some programmed meetings periods of silence and meditation are provided during which Friends feel free to speak from the body of the meeting.

Public Friend – A Friend who represents Quaker principles to the wider world.

QEW – Quaker Earthcare Witness. www.quakerearthcare.org

Quaker – Unofficial name of a member of the Religious Society of Friends; originally a derogatory term.

Quaker process – Practices typically used by Quakers to make corporate decisions, such as taking the sense of the meeting and writing minutes, as well as typical ways the meeting community functions, such as the reliance on committees and clerks.


Quarterly meeting – A regional gathering of members of constituent monthly meetings; two or more quarterly meetings typically constitute a yearly meeting. Formerly, these groups met four times a year.

Queries – The questions which, together with the advices, enable individuals and meetings to examine themselves in relation to the standard of conduct which the Religious Society of Friends has established for itself.

QVS – Quaker Voluntary Service. www.quakervoluntaryservice.org
Recorder – The person who maintains statistical information about memberships, marriages, births, and deaths in the meeting. (Not the same as recording clerk.)

Recording clerk – The person who writes the minutes of a meeting for business or other Friends decision-making body. The recording clerk is an assistant to the presiding clerk who is ultimately responsible for creating minutes for the approval of the meeting or other Friends body. (Not the same as recorder.)

Recording ministers – The practice in some yearly meetings of listing members recognized as having the gift of ministry. North Pacific Yearly Meeting does not record ministers.

Released Friend – A Friend with a concern who is relieved from holding meeting offices and serving on committees. In some cases, released Friends are provided financial support in order to pursue a leading or ministry.


Remote Friend – A Friend who lives at a great distance from a monthly meeting or worship group.

Right ordering – Proceeding according to those Friends procedures that seek to discern and carry out God’s will. See also good order.

Rise of meeting – The time a meeting for worship ends. See also break meeting.

Rising clerk – An incoming clerk.

Rising concern – A concern raised with increasing frequency or urgency in a body of Friends.

RSWR – Right Sharing of World Resources. www.rswr.org

Run ahead of one’s Guide – To go beyond the measure of Light one has been given.

Season – To take the time necessary to seek clarity rather than moving hastily to resolve a concern or issue. The process resembles seasoning firewood more than seasoning food.

Seasoned Friend – An experienced Friend to whom others look for guidance and clarity. See also weighty Friend.
**Sense of the meeting** – A collective understanding emerging from a *meeting for business*, gathered and articulated by the *clerk* for the approval of the meeting. See also *unity*.

**Set off** – To establish a new body, such as when a *monthly meeting* forms a new *worship group*; for example, to set off a *worship group*.

**Silent grace** – A short interval of silent *worship* and thanksgiving before a meal.

**Silent worship** – Worship in which Friends gather in silence, out of which individuals may speak as led by the Spirit. See also *meeting for worship* and *worship*.

**Society of Friends** – See *Religious Society of Friends*.

**Sojourning member** – A Friend temporarily residing in the area of another *monthly meeting*, formally recognized by that meeting as a participating member.

**Speak to one’s condition** – Something that “speaks to someone’s condition” touches them at the deepest spiritual level, whether by a message directly from God, or through the words or actions of another person.

**Speaking out of the silence** – See *moved to speak* and *vocal ministry*.

**Stand aside** – To declare oneself to be not in *unity* with a *meeting for business* decision. The Friend who stands aside does not seek to block the proceeding and has a responsibility to support and carry forward the decision of the meeting. That person may ask to have the lack of agreement *minuted*.

**Stand in the way** – To declare oneself to be unable to unite with a proposed *meeting for business minute*. This declaration causes the meeting to examine the issue more fully. If the meeting subsequently reaches *unity*, the Friend who is unable to unite with the decision may ask to have the lack of agreement *minuted*.

**Standing in the Light** – A state of being guided by the *Inward Light*.

**State of Society report** – A report of the condition of a *monthly meeting* sent annually to the *quarterly meeting* and from the quarterly meeting to the *yearly meeting*. Sometimes called “State of the Society report” or “State of the Meeting report.”
Stop in the mind – Uneasiness about a proposed course of action.

Support committee – A committee for nurture and care that meets regularly with a Friend filling a responsible position. See also anchor committee.

Tender – Vulnerable to the Spirit. Tenderness may be expressed by gentleness, consideration, lovingkindness, sympathy, and care.

Testimony – (1) An outward expression or demonstration of faith which serves as a guide for action. Core testimonies can include integrity, simplicity, equality, community, peace, and earth care. (2) Public statement or witness grounded in Friends beliefs.

That of God in everyone – A divine principle or seed in each person. The expression derives from George Fox’s call “to walk cheerfully over the world, answering that of God in every one.” See also Inward Light.

Threshing session – A meeting held to discuss a controversial issue. At such a meeting all points of view are heard, but no decisions made.

Travel minute – A letter of endorsement a meeting gives to one of its members who is traveling under the weight of a concern. For travel outside the yearly meeting, the yearly meeting endorses the minute.

Truth – Friends understanding of right action as discerned under divine Guidance.

Under the care – When an activity, program, or event has a meeting taking responsibility for it, it is under the care of that meeting. A marriage, a worship group, or a school or similar endeavor can be “under the care” of a monthly meeting.

Unity – A recognition of the truth emerging from a group’s corporate search and yielding to the Holy Spirit in its decision-making. See also sense of the meeting, stand aside, stand in the way.

Universalist Friends – Quakers who hold that there is spiritual truth to be found at the base of all religious traditions.

Unprogrammed meeting – A meeting for worship without pastor or prearranged program. Gathered Friends sit in silence, waiting upon God and leadings of the Spirit which may give rise to vocal messages to share with the meeting. See also worship.
**Visitation** – Travel to homes, meetings, and other Friends groups for outreach and spiritual nurture.

**Visiting Committee** – (1) A monthly meeting committee that calls upon a Friend or family that has requested to transfer membership into a new monthly meeting. (2) A quarterly meeting committee that visits a local group seeking to become a monthly meeting.

**Vocal ministry** – A message, prayer, or song shared during meeting for worship.

**Wait upon the Lord** – See worship.

**Waiting worship** – See unprogrammed meeting and worship.

**Weighty Friend** – Member who is recognized as having special experience and wisdom important to Friends. See also seasoned Friend.

**Western Friend** – A Quaker magazine published for Intermountain, North Pacific, and Pacific Yearly Meetings by the Friends Bulletin Corporation. [https://westernfriend.org/](https://westernfriend.org/)

**Witness** – (as a verb) To testify to or show evidence of religious beliefs and convictions. (as a noun) The person or group testifying, or their words or actions.

**Worldly** – Refers to non-spiritual values or concerns. Historically, “worldly” meant non-Quaker values and behavior.

**Worship** – (as a verb) To actively seek and attend to God’s will in meeting for worship or other gatherings of Friends. (as a noun) The act of gathering for this purpose. Sometimes called expectant worship, silent worship, waiting worship, or waiting upon the Lord.

**Worship-discussion** – An opportunity, usually in a small group, to reflect deeply on a topic. It differs from worship-sharing in that Friends may speak more than once and may respond directly to what others have said. Participants maintain a spirit of worship and return to silence after each person speaks.

**Worship group** – A group convened to worship regularly after the manner of Friends, usually under the care of a monthly meeting.

**Worship-sharing** – An opportunity, usually in a small group, to reflect deeply on a topic or a set of queries, to build community with others, and to feel the movement of the Spirit within the group; neither a conversation nor a discussion. See also worship-discussion.
**WQM** – Willamette Quarterly Meeting, one of the *quarterly meetings* in NPYM.

**Yearly meeting** – An association of *monthly meetings*, often encompassing several regional *quarterly meetings*, that convenes annually for *worship*, business, and fellowship.

**Young Adult Friend** – In NPYM, meeting participants of post-high-school age, 18 to about 35 years old.
Select Bibliography:  
Books and Periodicals, with Sources

The following selection of classic and recent Quaker publications is intended to serve as a starting point for individuals and meetings who are in search of writings on Friends beliefs, practices, and history. More extensive bibliographies can be found in the *Historical Dictionary of the Friends (Quakers)* and both volumes of Patricia Loring’s *Listening Spirituality*, all listed below under “general”. It may be helpful to note that older publications may be reprinted by a variety of sources.

Useful addresses for obtaining Quaker literature include:

QuakerBooks of FGC, Pendle Hill, 338 Plush Mill Road, Wallingford, PA 19086 or [www.quakerbooks.org](http://www.quakerbooks.org).

This is the successor to Friends Book Store, which served Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, later became Quaker Books of Friends General Conference, and subsequently merged with the Pendle Hill Bookstore in April of 2015.

Barclay Press, 211 N. Meridian St., #101, Newberg, OR 97132 or [www.barclaypress.com/bookstore](http://www.barclaypress.com/bookstore). A West Coast source for a number of titles that are of interest to Friends.

Vintage Quaker Books, 181 Hayden Rowe St., Hopkinton, MA 01748 or [www.vintagequakerbooks.com](http://www.vintagequakerbooks.com). Vintage is a source for out-of-print Quakeriana.

**General**

Abbott, Margery Post; Mary Ellen Chijioke; Pink Dandelion; John William Oliver Jr. *Historical Dictionary of the Friends (Quakers).* The
Scarecrow Press, Inc., 2003. A comprehensive volume useful for quick reference or as a beginning for further study; includes an extensive bibliography.


Loring, Patricia. *Listening Spirituality. Volume 2: Corporate Spiritual Practice among Friends*. Openings Press, 1999. The two volumes show a way to spiritual formation rooted in Quaker experience. They are clearly written and suggest numerous resources for exploration.


**Disciplines**


**History**


Hamm, Thomas D. *The Quakers in America*, Columbia University Press, 2003. According to the author’s preface, this scholarly study attempts to “describe and explain contemporary American Quakerism in its considerable diversity”.


Jones, Rufus. *Quakers in the American Colonies*, Macmillan, 1911. An account of the far-reaching influence of Friends in the colonial period and the decline that followed the American Revolution.


**Journals, Letters, and Biography**


Brinton, Howard:


Manousos, Anthony. *Howard and Anna Brinton: Re-inventors of Quakerism in the Twentieth Century: An Interpretive Biography*. QuakerBridge Media of Friends General Conference, 2013. The Brintons were a formative influence during the early years of what became the independent yearly meetings in the western United States.

Fell, Margaret:

Fell, Margaret. *A Sincere and Constant Love: An Introduction to The Writings of Margaret Fell*. T. H. S. Wallace (ed.). Friends United

Fell, Margaret. *Undaunted Zeal: The Letters of Margaret Fell*. Elsa F. Glines (ed.). Friends United Press, 2003. This is the first appearance of the letters from this pivotal figure in the beginning of Quakerism.

Kunze, Bonnelyn Young. *Margaret Fell and the Rise of Quakerism*. Stanford University Press, 1994. The author shows that in keeping with Margaret Fell’s status and personality, she was a co-leader with George Fox in the first fifty years of Quakerism.


Fox, George:


Ingle, H. Larry. *First Among Friends: George Fox & the Creation of Quakerism*. Oxford University Press, 1994. This volume brings George Fox vividly to life and shows the important part he played in establishing the Religious Society of Friends.

Fry, Elizabeth:


Woolman, John:


Plank, Geoffrey. *John Woolman’s Path to the Peaceable Kingdom: A Quaker in the British Empire*. University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012. This biography brings forward Woolman’s fidelity to Quaker discipline, his thoughts on work, commercial activity, and his understanding of the process of inspiration.


**Worship and Devotion**

Anon. *A Guide to True Peace or the Excellency of Inward and Spiritual Prayer*, 1813, frequently reprinted since. The 1946 Pendle Hill edition notes that this small book, compiled by two Friends from the writings of Fenelon, Guyon, and Molinos, has been widely used as a devotional book by members of the Religious Society of Friends.


**Bibles & Bible Study**

*New Revised Standard Version* (NRSV). Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA. This is the version used throughout this NPYM *Faith and Practice*. It is a translation that adopted inclusive gender language.


Greenleaf-Murer, Esther. *Quaker Bible Index: An Index to Scripture References in the Works of Fox, Barclay, Penn, Woolman and Others*. Quaker Press of Friends General Conference, 2001. CD-ROM Disk. This is a tool
for identifying Scripture passages of importance to early Friends and locating representative uses of them.

**Religious Education**


**Peace and Social Concerns**


Leuze, Robert (ed.). *Each of us Inevitable*. FLGBTQC, 2003. A compendium of addresses and essays on being gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, or an ally.


**Other Publications of Interest**


**North Pacific Yearly Meeting Publications**


Some Quaker Periodicals


*Pendle Hill Pamphlets*, Pendle Hill Publications, Wallingford, PA 19086 or www.pendlehill.org. Quaker faith and practice, the inward journey, social concerns, religion and psychology, literature, art, and biography have all been subjects in this series, which issues five pamphlets a year.

*Friends World News*, Friends World Committee for Consultation, 1506 Race Street, Philadelphia, PA 19102 or www-fwccamericas.org. The purpose of the Friends World Committee for Consultation is to encourage fellowship among all the branches of the Religious Society of Friends.

*Quaker History*, Friends Historical Association, Haverford College, 370 Lancaster Avenue, Haverford, PA 19041 or www.haverford.edu/library/fha/welcome. Publishes articles on Quaker contributions to issues such as social justice, education, and literature.

*Quaker Religious Thought*, Box 6042, George Fox University, 414 N. Meridian Street, Newberg, OR 97132. A journal with an academic cast sponsored by the Quaker Theological Discussion Group.

*Quaker Theology*, P.O. Box 1344, Fayetteville, NC 28302, or www.quaker.org/quest. Describes itself as a progressive journal and forum for discussion and study; includes helpful book reviews.

*Western Friend*, 2625 Middlefield Road, #565, Palo Alto, CA 94306 or westernfriend.org. The official publication of Pacific, North Pacific, and Intermountain Yearly Meetings of the Religious Society of Friends.
To ______ Monthly Meeting of Friends

Dear Friends:

____[name/s]____, [a member/members] of this Monthly Meeting, having moved with [his/her/their] minor [child/children], ____[name/s]____, [has/have] requested a transfer of membership to your meeting. Consideration has been given to this and there appears to be no obstruction to granting the request. We therefore recommend [him/her/them] to your loving care and remain, in love, your friends.

Signed on behalf of ______ Monthly Meeting of Friends, held at ____[location]____ on ____________, 20__.  

____________
Clerk

A copy of the transferring member’s membership record may accompany this certificate of transfer.
North Pacific Yearly Meeting
Acceptance of Transfer

To ________ Monthly Meeting of Friends

Dear Friends:

We have received your Certificate of Transfer dated ________, 20__, and have accepted ____[name/s]____ into membership with us.

Signed on behalf of ________ Monthly Meeting of Friends, held at ____[location]____ on ________, 20__.

____________
Clerk
# Meeting Membership Record

Member’s full name ____________________________________________
(give birth name in parenthesis, if different)

Date of birth ___________________ Place of birth ___________________
(month, day, year) (city, state, country)

**Admitted to membership** Date ____________________________
(month, day, year)

Admitted by means of:

☐ Convincement  ☐ Certificate of transfer from:

______________________________________________________________
(monthly meeting, city, state, country)

**Parents**

Father's name ____________________________________________

Mother's birth name _________________________________________

**Addresses**

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**Removed from membership** Date ____________________________
(month, day, year)

Membership ended through:

☐ Death*  ☐ Release from the Society  ☐ Certificate of transfer to:

______________________________________________________________
(monthly meeting, city, state, country)

* Member's burial place _________________________________________
(continued)
Service history and other notes

Marriage or committed relationship

(1) Married to / in committed relationship with __________________________

Date __________________ Place __________________

(month, day, year) (city, state, country)

Partner a member of the Religious Society of Friends? □ No □ Yes:

(monthly meeting, city, state, country)

Relationship under care of a Friends Meeting? □ No □ Yes:

(monthly meeting, city, state, country)

Relationship ended by: □ Death □ Divorce Date: __________________

(month, day, year)

Notes: __________________________________________

(continued)

(2) Married to / in committed relationship with __________________________

Date __________________ Place __________________

(month, day, year) (city, state, country)

Partner a member of the Religious Society of Friends? □ No □ Yes:

(monthly meeting, city, state, country)

Relationship under care of a Friends Meeting? □ No □ Yes:

(monthly meeting, city, state, country)

Relationship ended by: □ Death □ Divorce Date: __________________

(month, day, year)

Notes: __________________________________________

(continued)
Children

(1) Name ________________________________________________

Date of birth ______ Place of birth ________________________
(month, day, year) (city, state, country)

Date of marriage ______ Partner's name ______________________

Member of the Religious Society of Friends? □ No □ Yes:
________________________________________________________
(monthly meeting, city, state, country)

Notes: __________________________________________________
________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________

(2) Name ________________________________________________

Date of birth ______ Place of birth ________________________
(month, day, year) (city, state, country)

Date of marriage ______ Partner's name ______________________

Member of the Religious Society of Friends? □ No □ Yes:
________________________________________________________
(monthly meeting, city, state, country)

Notes: __________________________________________________
________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________

(3) Name ________________________________________________

Date of birth ______ Place of birth ________________________
(month, day, year) (city, state, country)

Date of marriage ______ Partner's name ______________________

Member of the Religious Society of Friends? □ No □ Yes:
________________________________________________________
(monthly meeting, city, state, country)

Notes: __________________________________________________
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(Attach additional pages as necessary.)
# Information and Instructions on Final Affairs

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I request that the Religious Society of Friends carry out the following upon my death:

The information below may help the Religious Society of Friends carry out any wishes:

## 1. Persons to notify immediately

(next of kin, local contacts, executor, etc.)

Use back of form for additional names.

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<th>Relationship</th>
<th>Relationship</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## 2. Member of Memorial Society?

- [ ] No
- [ ] Yes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Address</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Telephone</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## 3. Disposal of body:

- [ ] Burial
- [ ] Cremation
- [ ] Medical or scientific uses (describe)

If cremation, wishes for disposal of ashes

If burial, preferred cemetery

- [ ] Common plot
- [ ] Family plot

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location of deed</th>
<th>Location of release papers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Preferred undertaker

## 4. Burial insurance:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Company</th>
<th>Policy #</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If there is no insurance, expenses will be met as follows:
### 5. Services desired
(include pertinent details; use back of form if needed)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Option</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Memorial meeting for worship</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Funeral</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (describe)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Special requests

### 6. Flowers will be accepted
(No) (Yes; where:

- In lieu of flowers, contributions may be made to:

### 7. Special instructions of death occurs far from home

### 8. Location of will

### Location of insurance policies

### 9. Instructions for care of minor children if there is no surviving parent

### 10. Information for death certificate
(must agree with legal records and policies)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Full legal name</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current address</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date of birth</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Birthplace</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Citizenship</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occupation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Present employer</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employer's address</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father's full name</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother's maiden name</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Signature</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Received for meeting by**
Appendix:
Chronology of NPYM Meetings 
and Worship Groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Worship Group (under the care of)</th>
<th>Preparative Meeting (under the care of)</th>
<th>Monthly Meeting</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agate Passage (University)</td>
<td>Agate Passage (University)</td>
<td>Agate Passage, 2004</td>
<td>Some founding Friends from Indianola WG (unsponsored; later called “Indianola-Bainbridge Island WG”).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bellingham, 1975 (University)</td>
<td>Bellingham, 1980 (University)</td>
<td>Bellingham, 1997</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Billings, 1968 (unsponsored)</td>
<td>Billings (unsponsored)</td>
<td>Billings, 1984</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boise Valley, 1982 (Corvallis)</td>
<td>Boise Valley (Corvallis)</td>
<td>Boise Valley, 1990</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bozeman, 1960s (MGOF)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>See Heartland MM and MGOF.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bridge City 1996 (Multnomah)</td>
<td>Bridge City (Multnomah)</td>
<td>Bridge City, 2004</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buckley (Tacoma)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>In south King County, WA.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Butte, 1982</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Laid down. See Heartland and MGOF.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worship Group (under the care of)</td>
<td>Preparative Meeting (under the care of)</td>
<td>Monthly Meeting</td>
<td>Notes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Oregon, 1982 (Salem)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>In Bend OR. Formerly called Juniper WG. Note that what is now Salem MM was originally called Central Oregon WG and was part of Willamette Valley MM until 1962.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coeur d’Alene (Eastside)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Laid down.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corvallis, 1927 (Willamette Valley)</td>
<td>Corvallis, 1954 (Willamette Valley)</td>
<td>Corvallis, 1962</td>
<td>See Willamette Valley MM.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deer Lodge, 1982</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Laid down.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dillon, early 1980s (MGOF)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>See Heartland MM and MGOF.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eastside, 1956 (University)</td>
<td>Eastside, 1957 (University)</td>
<td>Eastside, 1961</td>
<td>There have been several WGs in Ellensburg over the years.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ellensburg, 1951 (unsponsored)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eugene (Salem)</td>
<td>Eugene, 1949 (Salem)</td>
<td>Eugene, 1956</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eureka, 2004 (Missoula)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Everett, 1979 (University)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Now Marysville WG.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fanno Creek, 1986 (Multnomah)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Florence, 1991 (Eugene)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glacier Valley, 2010 (Missoula)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grants Pass, 2016 (South Mountain)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gray’s Harbor, 2004</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Laid down.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worship Group (under the care of)</td>
<td>Preparative Meeting (under the care of)</td>
<td>Monthly Meeting</td>
<td>Notes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Great Falls, 1987 (MGOF)</td>
<td>Heartland, 1986</td>
<td>Heartland, 1989</td>
<td>Heartland MM combined the Bozeman, Butte, Deer Lodge, and Helena WGs. Heartland was laid down as a MM and folded into MGOF, a quarterly meeting, which functions for this purpose as a monthly meeting.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helena, 1975 (MGOF)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>See Heartland MM and MGOF.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Horizon House, 2016 (unsponsored)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>In Seattle WA. Most participants are from University Meeting.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indianola, 1979 (unsponsored)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Later became Indianola-Bainbridge Island WG and came under care of University MM. See Agate Passage MM.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Juniper (Salem)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Became Central Oregon WG in 1982.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lopez, 1989 (Salmon Bay)</td>
<td>Lopez (Bellingham)</td>
<td>Lopez Island, 2016</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower Columbia, 2008 (Multnomah)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>In Ilwaco WA.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid-Columbia, 2015 (Eastside)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>In Kennewick WA.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mission Valley, 2004 (Missoula)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worship Group (under the care of)</td>
<td>Preparative Meeting (under the care of)</td>
<td>Monthly Meeting</td>
<td>Notes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------</td>
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<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missoula, 1940s (University)</td>
<td>Missoula, 1983 (University)</td>
<td>Missoula, 1986</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monroe, 1987 (under the care of a committee from University, Eastside, and Salmon Bay MMs, then under the care of Pacific Northwest QM)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>WG in the state prison. Laid down 2000.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Montana Gathering of Friends [MGOF]: joined NPYM as a quarterly meeting in 1988; functioning also as a monthly meeting since 2010</td>
<td>Multnomah, 1957</td>
<td></td>
<td>MGOF is a quarterly meeting which since 2010 also functions as a monthly meeting for Friends in Bozeman, Dillon, Great Falls, and Helena WGs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mountain View, 1980 (Multnomah)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multnomah (Willamette Valley)</td>
<td>Multnomah, 1951 (Willamette Valley)</td>
<td>Multnomah, 1957</td>
<td>Original name: Portland WG. See Willamette Valley MM.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ocean Park</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Olympia, 1972 (Tacoma)</td>
<td>Olympia, 1977 (Tacoma)</td>
<td>Olympia, 1979</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orcas Island, 1982 (unsponsored)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Laid down as a Friends WG; now an interdenominational group.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pocatello, 2004</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Laid down.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Port Townsend, 1960 (University)</td>
<td>Port Townsend (University)</td>
<td>Port Townsend, 2002</td>
<td>See Multnomah MM.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portland</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worship Group (under the care of)</td>
<td>Preparative Meeting (under the care of)</td>
<td>Monthly Meeting</td>
<td>Notes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pullman-Moscow (Eastside)</td>
<td>Pullman-Moscow, 1971 (Eastside)</td>
<td>Pullman-Moscow, 1982</td>
<td>Met informally since mid-2000s, under Multnomah MM’s care since 2016.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quaker Midweek Worship Group, mid-2000s (Multnomah)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salmon Bay, early 1980s (University)</td>
<td>Salmon Bay (University)</td>
<td>Salmon Bay, 1991</td>
<td>Original name: Central Oregon WG (1979). See Willamette MM.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>San Juan, 1978 (unsponsored)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sandpoint, 1980 (Eastside)</td>
<td>Sandpoint (Eastside)</td>
<td>Sandpoint, 1995</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sequim, late 1990s</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Laid down 2010.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shelton, 2004</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Laid down.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sheridan Community of Wyoming Friends Meeting, mid-1980s</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Sheridan Friends often participate in MGOF and NPYM activities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skagit, 1982</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Laid down.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sky Valley, 1996 (Eastside)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Seattle, 2003 (University)</td>
<td>South Seattle, 2007 (University)</td>
<td>South Seattle, 2011</td>
<td>Original name: Central Seattle Home WG (mid-1980s).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worship Group (under the care of)</td>
<td>Preparative Meeting (under the care of)</td>
<td>Monthly Meeting</td>
<td>Notes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spokane, 1978 (Eastside)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Laid down; re-formed w/ co-sponsorship of Spokane Friends Church, 2016.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tacoma, 1951 (University)</td>
<td>Tacoma, 1952 (University)</td>
<td>Tacoma, 1958</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tonasket, 2004</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Umpqua Valley, 1979 (Eugene)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University, 1934 (began under care of Friends Memorial Meeting [now North Seattle Friends Church, Puget Sound QM of Indiana YM])</td>
<td>University, 1938</td>
<td>University, 1940</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vashon, 1980 (Tacoma)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Originally an unsponsored WG.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waldron Island, early 1970s</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walla Walla (Eastside)</td>
<td>Walla Walla, 1980 (Eastside)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Willamette Valley, 1948 (part of two larger groups: Pacific YM and Northwest Half-Yearly Meeting)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Willamette Valley MM was formed by Portland (now Multnomah), Corvallis, and Central Oregon (now Salem) WGs. Multnomah became a separate MM in 1957. Willamette Valley MM divided into Corvallis and Salem MMs in 1962.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wolf Creek, 1975</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Laid down late 1980s.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix:
Friendly Use of Communication Technology

Technology can reduce the time, expense, and environmental impact of traveling in order to communicate. Emails, conference calls, and video connections can also aid people who have difficulties with mobility, hearing, or vision. We remain tender with each other during continuing changes in media and patient with the use of the devices themselves and their uneven rate of adoption. We also practice using the technology in advance, so that the equipment itself does not hinder our Friendly communication. Offering to help each other with communication technology skills can build community among us.

The focus of this appendix is on how Quaker groups use conference technology and email, not on individual use of electronic media.

Conference Technologies

Conference technologies may be used for several purposes, including committee meetings and consultations, worship-sharing, and clearness processes. Conference technologies have proven to be media through which Spirit can move and connect Friends. Not every Friends group has found conference calls suitable for discernment. The following suggestions have been found helpful:
For the Clerk:

- Arrange a time for the meeting in advance.
- Send the agenda, related materials, and contact instructions out several days ahead.
- As appropriate, arrange for minutes to be written and distributed.
- Encourage Friends to center themselves before joining the conference.
- Encourage Friends to begin by greeting one another. Then open with silent worship before turning to the meeting agenda.
- When the group is large or not familiar with each other, ask people to say their names each time they speak.
- Remind Friends to pause between comments.
- Keep track of who has spoken and invite those who have been quieter to speak.
- If a decision is being made, ask whether all are united in it. Give enough opportunity for any participant to voice hesitations or concerns.
- At any time necessary, ask for silence to re-center in the Spirit.
- Conclude the conversation within the agreed-upon time (typically no more than 90 minutes).
- Finish the time together with silent worship, or suggest that Friends continue in worship afterward.

For the Participants:

- If possible, enter into worship before joining the conference.
- Enter the conference on time with materials and agenda close at hand.
- If the clerk requests it, state your name each time you speak.
- Speak concisely.
- Leave pauses between speakers. Take care not to interrupt or talk over anyone.
• State when you become lost or confused. Ask for silence when needed.

• Remain in a location with good reception.

• Use a quiet space away from disruptions. Muting your equipment can screen out background noise.

Queries for Friends Using Conference Technologies

• Have we determined whether a conference technology is appropriate to the task at hand and the group involved? For this work, does the group need to hear each other, see each other, have access to shared documents, or be in the same room together?

• How do we accommodate Deaf and hard-of-hearing Friends? How do we accommodate blind and sight-impaired Friends?

• Do we conduct our conferences in a spirit of worship?

• How do we interpret a Friend’s silence during a conference?

• Do we ask for clarification when we need it?

Email

Email, when used carefully and thoughtfully, can support good Quaker process in business and decision making. Quaker meetings and committees may use email extensively to disseminate information, minutes, and agendas, and to attend to logistics. Some committee work seems to lend itself to email communication. Email may not be suitable for deep listening and group discernment.

We attend to email messages as carefully as when speaking with someone face to face. Because an email can be sent quickly, caution is helpful. Choose words carefully; we cannot depend on tone of voice to shape our meaning. Take time to respond with care. If the matter is complicated or sensitive, let the reply season for a while. Always review everything before sending.
When agreeing to conduct business by email, we make a commitment to check messages regularly and we respond to messages in a timely manner to ensure others of our continuing engagement.

Email can work well when a group needs to gather information and a central person is collecting feedback. When many are in a discussion on a topic, the process takes special attentiveness. Participants treat the email conversation as they would a face-to-face conversation with Friends. Read all prior messages first, pay attention to where the discussion is going before responding, and consider carefully what – and when – to contribute.

When decisions are being made by email, someone acts as clerk, and the group follows the good order of Friends. If the conversation is moving too quickly or carelessly, if the conversation is splintering or losing focus, or if some people feel they are not being heard, the clerk ends the email conversation and suggests a face-to-face meeting.

**Group Email Lists and Listservs**

Listservs or email groups allow Friends to direct messages easily to a whole meeting or to an interest group. A listserv or email group for a whole meeting is a valuable tool for cultivating and nurturing community and allows Friends to share important announcements relevant to the meeting, such as agendas and reports for an upcoming meeting for business. To ensure beneficial use of these tools, it may be helpful for the meeting to establish guidelines, for example:

- Reminding Friends that emails are best written and read with respect, tolerance, and love.
- Asking that emails be directed to the whole group, not an individual.
- Distinguishing between announcements-only groups and ongoing discussion groups.
- Asking that Friends use informative subject lines. Indicate whether a message is of a secular nature – for example, when a Friend is advertising an apartment for rent.
• Advising that the group email list or listserv is not an opinion forum nor a means of resolving interpersonal conflicts.

Sometimes it may be necessary for a host to caution a Friend who uses the listserv or group email list inappropriately. This should be done privately, but a general reminder may be shared with the list. If after a reminder or two the Friend continues to make inappropriate posts, the meeting may wish to explore ways to preserve Friendly communication.

Queries for Friends Using Listservs and Group Email Lists

• Is use of the listserv or group email list appropriate to the task at hand and the group involved?
• How do we accommodate Friends who do not use electronic media?
• Is a clerk or facilitator needed for this email discussion?
• How do we interpret a Friend’s unresponsiveness in an email exchange? Do we invite comment from those who haven’t been heard from?
• Do we remember that there is that of God in every person who will ever read this message?
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