

New England Yearly Meeting *Faith and Practice*

Chapter 5: Ministry and Counsel

Draft

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INTRODUCTION

I. The Life of the Spirit in Community

- 1) Friends affirm the vital experience of a Spirit which illumines our lives, an Inward Guide whose nature is made manifest in our lives when we heed its promptings. We understand

5 this Spirit to be invitational, to be challenging, to be inclusive, and to call us into community.
6 In attending to this Guide, Ministry & Counsel members learn to be alert to the ways in
7 which the community may need to be renewed, disciplined, refreshed, or enlivened. The
8 authority of Ministry & Counsel lies in its ability to discern and articulate God’s invitation
9 into a Spirit-guided life.

- 10 2) Early Friends began a practice of having a smaller body within the meeting community who
11 met separately to worship together, discuss the emerging Quaker approach to faith, and
12 hold the meeting and its members in prayer. The Friends in these meetings who were
13 known for the power of their vocal ministry began to be named as ministers; some traveled
14 extensively to spread the Quaker message. Those Friends who were “most grown in the
15 Power and the life, in the pure discerning in the Truth” (Dewsbury, *Works*, 1689) were
16 named as elders. These were Friends most alert to the spiritual and physical needs of the
17 community and who nurtured its life, organization, and business practices; some also
18 provided spiritual accompaniment to traveling ministers.
- 19 3) In New England these bodies of ministers and elders evolved into what is usually called
20 Ministry & Counsel. While all Friends have a responsibility for ministry and for caring for one
21 another as members of a meeting, Ministry & Counsel is charged with giving particular
22 attention to nurturing ministry and being alert to the spiritual life and physical needs of the
23 entire meeting community. Caring for the vitality of worship, pastoral care, clearness,
24 encouraging ministry, spiritual nurture and the promotion of individual spiritual practices,
25 and conflict resolution — all are loving manifestations of a functioning Ministry & Counsel.

26 **II. Friends who serve on Ministry and Counsel**

- 27 4) Meeting members who are appointed to Ministry & Counsel are Friends with a deeply-
28 rooted commitment and experience of paying attention to the Inward Guide. Their lives
29 give evidence of spiritual wisdom, discretion and compassion. They are faithful in
30 attendance at meetings for worship and for business. Their own active spiritual lives and
31 grounding in Quaker tradition are resources that inform their decision-making. It is
32 customary for the meeting clerk to serve *ex officio* on M&C. In a few New England meetings
33 the work of M&C is upheld and supported by a pastor who also serves *ex officio* on Ministry
34 & Counsel. A turnover of membership on Ministry & Counsel is encouraged as a means of
35 sharing the responsibility, of developing gifts of spiritual leadership within the membership,
36 and of revitalizing the body with fresh vision.

37 **III. Structuring the Work of Ministry & Counsel**

- 38 5) Monthly meetings in New England vary in the ways they cover the responsibilities of
39 Ministry & Counsel. In most meetings the work is under one designated body named
40 Ministry & Counsel. In large meetings, M&C’s work is often distributed among several
41 bodies or subcommittees which are named for their function, such as Ministry & Worship,
42 Pastoral Care, and Membership & Clearness. In meetings using this sort of structure, it’s

important for the clerk of Ministry & Counsel to ensure the coordination of the work of these committees.

- 6) In some meetings Ministry & Counsel is a “committee of the whole”, a gathering of the entire monthly meeting at appointed times to consider the spiritual health of the meeting and to carry out responsibilities concerning marriage, membership and pastoral care, and to appoint clearness and support committees. As with any meeting of Ministry & Counsel, those present take time to hold the meeting in the Light, returning to the center in prayer as often as needed to support their spiritual discernment. The meeting clerk and appointed M&C clerk(s) ensure that the distinction between M&C and business meeting is maintained, reminding those present that some actions require business meeting approval. (*See *to be written* for terms, officers, regularity of meetings, relationships to meeting committees and to the quarterly and Yearly Meeting.*)

THE WORK OF MINISTRY & COUNSEL

I. Spiritual Foundations

- 7) Loving attentiveness and discernment are central to the spiritual nurture of a meeting and of its individual members. Ministry & Counsel holds the community in prayer, seeking to discern where the meeting is in need of guidance, encouragement, or fresh vision, and offering ways to support these concerns. Ministry & Counsel relies on faith, trust, openness, and humility in its work. In times of conflict, these spiritual disciplines can encourage members to listen attentively to others and to stay in community, waiting on the leadings of the Spirit. M&C takes care that the meetinghouse is an accessible and inclusive space that enables full participation for each person. It promotes an environment that encourages diversity of expression and open exploration. In such a community, Friends are able to express spiritual concerns knowing that they will be lovingly held. It is important for Ministry & Counsel members to remain alert to the condition of individuals within the meeting — of Friends who may be in distress, in need of guidance (eldering) or of ongoing support, as well as Friends whose spiritual gifts and ministry could benefit from recognition and encouragement.

II. Concerns for Ministry & Counsel

- 8) Ministry & Counsel agendas are often complex, involving long-term work on challenging issues and collaboration with meeting committees. M&C is often asked to consider those items that have no committee ‘home’ elsewhere in the meeting. At times M&C may find that the scope of its work has become too large to allow it to attend to its central purposes. If there is a feeling of overload, time in worship can re-center the group and ground its discernment of priorities. Business meeting may assist by forming short-term working groups to handle specific topics or issues.

- 9) Some of Ministry & Counsel's deliberations need to be confidential. Keeping open communications with the meeting as much as possible invites the community to trust the work of Ministry & Counsel. Friends need to know M&C is available to hear any concern while maintaining confidentiality. *(See Appendix 5C on confidentiality.)*

II.A Care of Worship

- 10) Ministry & Counsel attends to the quality and the depth of worship with both an awareness of Friend's traditions and sensitivity to the Spirit behind those traditions; it calls on all Friends to be aware of the moving of the inward spirit of Truth in their own lives and in the life and ministry of their meeting community. Ministry & Counsel holds particular responsibility for building a climate of respect for the many ways individual Friends express their experience of the Light.

- 11) M&C provides care of all meetings for worship, including memorial meetings, weddings, and other specially called meetings. It ensures that meetings are held in good order. It is responsible for the appropriate closing of worship and for developing a practice at the rise of meeting that welcomes visitors and builds community.

II.A.i Protecting the integrity of worship

- 12) In Friends' worship there is an interplay between gathered silence and vocal ministry. M&C encourages spiritually-grounded ministry and engages with Friends in whom it is a consistent gift. It may need to offer loving personal reminders to Friends of the purpose of space between messages, the importance of silence to Quaker practice, or of too-frequent speaking or singing by an individual. Ministry & Counsel can guide the community in becoming sensitive to cues that an offering of sung ministry may or may not be an invitation for other worshippers to join in. It also encourages Friends who may be reticent to speak to respond to the Spirit's prompting to offer vocal ministry.

- 13) Ministry & Counsel is alert to dynamics or actions which are disruptive to the integrity of worship. Though these occasions are rare, each meeting needs a clear and widely-understood plan for how to deal with such behavior immediately and respectfully should it occur. Sometimes a person's disruptive behavior is not an isolated event, in which case it will require ongoing pastoral care or challenging conversations and action. When a message is clearly not spiritually led, members of M&C are prepared to talk privately, promptly, and tenderly with the speaker. *(These concerns are addressed more fully in Appendix 5A and in the section in this chapter on conflict transformation, paragraphs 37-42.)*

II.A.ii Welcome and inclusion in worship

- 14) Friends believe that the Quaker message has the power to be transformative for people of all backgrounds, identities and abilities. Ministry & Counsel works with the meeting to counter prejudice in all its manifestations, overt and subtle, and to notice and address examples and patterns of oppression that may hold meetings back from the fullness of inclusion. M&C holds loving concern for those who may be hesitant to visit a meeting

because of their race, age, financial condition, family configuration, ableness, sexual orientation or gender identity. In a spiritually hospitable and inclusive meeting, it is clear to all who enter the meetinghouse doors or visit its website or other online presence that they are welcome.

15) Meetings embrace people of all ages in meetings for worship, believing that one can access the Divine and be a channel for ministry from a young age. To that end M&C pays attention to the varying needs of children, young adults, parents, and older people. It is a common practice for children to spend some time in worship with the whole meeting, either at the beginning or the end, and be offered appropriate opportunities for spiritual nurture outside the meeting room. In some meetings, children remain in the room throughout worship; some of those meetings provide quiet hands-on activities for children while worship is in progress. In meetings with programming for children, it is important for M&C to consider how to bring these younger Friends into the full hour of worship. M&C is also sensitive to what creates a welcoming space for older adults. Some meetings offer intergenerational worship programs on a regular basis. *(See the Appendices 5A and 5B for suggestions on intergenerational worship and on offering an inclusive, welcoming and accommodated meeting.)*

16) M&C engages with newcomers to welcome them and to guide them towards materials and opportunities that will help them learn more about Quakerism. It notices those visitors who return and show an interest in Quaker faith and practice, finding ways to invite them into more engagement with the meeting.

17) Many meetings include worship via an online platform. It is important to make sure that all who would like to participate in online meetings have the support they need to do so.

II.B Support of Corporate Discernment

18) Though distinct from meetings for worship, Quaker business meetings require spiritual grounding, a worshipful attitude, and the readiness to enter into silent worship at times. Friends' experience of God's guidance of the gathered community depends on the readiness of all present to pay heed to the Inward Guide, and to trust to unity in the Spirit even when there is strong disagreement. Some Ministry & Counsels routinely appoint Friends to serve as elders to hold the meeting in prayer while it conducts its business, especially if undertaking a challenging or controversial matter. *(See the Corporate Discernment Chapter.)*

19) The presence of the clerk of the meeting at Ministry & Counsel discussions is a valuable opportunity for consulting together about meeting concerns; the same is true for the inclusion of the pastor in pastoral meetings. M&C may be asked to season an important agenda item with the clerk before it is brought to business meeting. M&C's support can provide spiritual attention, counsel and a sounding board for the meeting clerk. The responsibility for the agenda and meeting for business itself, however, belongs to the clerk.

II.C Spiritual Nurture & Religious Education

- 20) Ministry & Counsel members are faithful in attending to their own spiritual practice and growth and help promote spiritual preparation and practice in the meeting community. They listen for the movement of the Spirit in the meeting, and provide for opportunities and programming that support and vitalize spiritual growth.
- 21) Through attentive listening to the meeting, they may become aware of what may be divine leadings for corporate witness. M&C may bring their discernment as a proposal to business meeting, trying to see if there is unity and leadership for committed social action, which might include collaboration with local ecumenical or interfaith communities. A peace and social justice committee may initiate and carry this work if the meeting has one.
- 22) Ministry & Counsel is alert to the quality of ministry in meetings for worship and considers what kind of forum or other opportunity may nurture the community. M&C or an adult religious education committee collaborating with them may offer study groups, faithfulness groups, public meetings, retreats and the circulation of literature, as well as promoting opportunities available throughout the quarterly or Yearly Meeting. Times of joint study open the opportunity for more extensive sharing of life and faith journeys than may happen during worship or social times. Celebrating and honoring the meeting's joys and special events is part of the community-building that Ministry & Counsel upholds, perhaps in collaboration with a committee dedicated to fellowship or hospitality. Ministry & Counsel, or an adult religious education committee, is also attentive to ways to more fully integrate newcomers into the meeting, and may offer programs to help them learn about Quaker faith and practice.
- 23) Nurturing the spiritual growth of children may be in the care of a committee devoted to the ministry and religious education of young people through child care, First Day School and Young Friends programs. While providing age appropriate programming for children, M&C also seeks to involve children and young people in the meeting's community life through intergenerational gatherings and family worship opportunities. M&C also takes care that families in the meeting are aware of programs in the Yearly Meeting such as Friends Camp, youth weekend retreats and other activities.

II.D Clearness

- 24) Central to the religious practice of Friends is the belief in the Inward Guide, and the ability to help each other discern God's will. Friends bring to the clearness process questions about personal and vocational direction as well as about marriage, membership, and leadings of the Spirit. Quakers trust that Truth can be revealed to those who earnestly seek it.
- 25) When a Friend is struggling with a decision in some area of their personal or professional life, they may form their own informal clearness committee for personal discernment without asking for the meeting's involvement, or they may ask for the meeting's help in this process. M&C's response to such requests is to arrange a clearness committee for personal discernment. After careful listening to the Friend's concern, clearness committee members

offer questions intended to help the individual bring the issue and its spiritual dimensions into greater clarity, and under the guidance of the Spirit.

26) In some circumstances the meeting itself is seeking clearness about its role in a prospective mutual and covenant relationship. This is the case when M&C forms a clearness committee for membership or for marriage under the care of the meeting. It also applies when Ministry & Counsel forms a clearness committee to consider taking a person's ministry under its care. These clearness processes are two-way streets. Those asking for clearness are looking for the committee's assistance in determining their readiness for membership, marriage, or ministry and for helping in their preparation for these new roles. The meeting is coming to its own clearness about taking the Friend into membership at this point, or holding a wedding under its care, or supporting a ministry.

27) Different considerations come into the organization of these committees. Membership clearness committees are comprised of members, for example, and a marriage clearness committee needs at least one married couple. M&C is advised to consider including participation from outside the monthly meeting for committees exploring leadings and ministries. This inclusion allows the meeting to bring into the process Friends whose expertise could be helpful to discernment and reflects the fact that the ministry may extend beyond the meeting. For any clearness committee it is advisable to bring fresh vision and objectivity to the process by including on the committee one or more people who are not personal friends of the person seeking clearness.

28) Clearness is a searching and intimate process, often requiring more than one meeting. At times the process brings forward unanticipated discoveries and questions. Sometimes the prospective member receives guidance on further spiritual study and exposure to Quaker practice before continuing the membership process. A couple may recognize that there are matters they need to resolve before moving ahead with their marriage. A Friend's leading may need more time to mature before Ministry & Counsel is clear to recommend corporate support. Occasions such as these are not failures but faithful steps in the shared process of a loving and spiritually-grounded clearness practice. *(See chapters on Membership and on Marriage. For more about M&C's support for leadings, see the Section on Recognizing and Nurturing Gifts, Leadings and Ministry, below, and the Gifts & Leadings Chapter (not yet written). For clearness committees for personal discernment, see Appendix 5E.)*

II.E M&C and Membership

29) Ministry & Counsel encourages membership by reaching out to faithful attenders who are involved in the life of the meeting to invite them into a conversation about membership. M&C responds to adult requests for membership or for transfer of membership by forming clearness committees comprised of meeting members. Part of the clearness committee's work is making explicit to applicants the covenant, reciprocal relationship between the meeting and its members. If clearness is found, Ministry & Counsel brings a recommendation to meeting for business that it approve the membership. All new memberships in the meeting, including transfers and associate memberships for children by parental request, are cause for M&C to plan a welcoming event.

30) The work of M&C includes outreach to its meeting members. It actively engages with young associate members as they emerge into adulthood, exploring the importance of Quakerism in their lives and helping them discern whether adult membership is their path. Ministry & Counsel maintains contact with members of all ages who are local but no longer involved with meeting, and with all members living at a distance. Depending on the response (or lack of it), these conversations can include such topics as returning to active engagement with the meeting, sojourning or transferring to another meeting, or laying down the membership. *(See section on Clearness, above, and the chapter on Membership and Appendix 4.)*

II.F M&C and Marriages in the Meeting

31) As with requests for membership, M&C responds to requests for a wedding held under the meeting's care by forming a clearness committee. If the committee and the couple are clear to proceed, Ministry & Counsel brings a recommendation to meeting for business for approval. The meeting's approval authorizes Ministry & Counsel to form a care of wedding committee. Quaker weddings, at which everyone joins the couple in signing the wedding certificate, are an expression of the covenant relationship between the meeting and the couple. The unique participatory ceremony is a meeting for worship that centers all present in the life of the Spirit.

32) The responsibilities of any marriage clearness or care of wedding committee concludes after the couple has married but Ministry & Counsel's support for the marriage continues through its pastoral care, which supports all couples in the meeting, married or not, who may be experiencing painful times or relationship difficulties, or who may wish to celebrate joys and relationship milestones with the community. *(See section on Clearness, above, and the chapter on Marriage and Appendix 6.)*

II.G M&C's Role in Pastoral Care and Conflict Transformation

II.G.i Pastoral Care of Individuals and Families

33) Attention and care may be extended to anyone in meeting in either brief or extended ways. An individual or family should be encouraged to seek help from the meeting with a personal crisis, family issue, or medical or emotional issue. Ministry & Counsel or a committee devoted to pastoral care fosters a spirit of community awareness and response to the needs of those in their midst who might benefit from support. M&C needs to remind the community frequently about how to reach out for help. In a pastoral meeting, much of this work is carried by the pastor with support from Friends in the meeting.

34) Pastoral care providers are concerned with the welfare of any who may be ill or experiencing other physical or emotional distress. Assistance may include reaching out to Friends who are not attending meeting to check in with them, or exploring ways to keep Friends connected with the meeting community who can no longer attend meetings for worship because of age or illness.

35) Friends carrying out pastoral care make visits, provide prayerful support and arrange for practical assistance such as transportation, meals and childcare where it may be needed. They also consider individual needs for guidance and personal counsel, arranging clearness committees and, where appropriate, recommending a support committee or professionally-trained help. It is important to realize the limits of what the meeting can offer in the way of time or expertise in counseling. Even when it is clear that professional help is needed, the meeting may still offer support in the way of prayer and practical assistance.

36) When there is a terminal illness in the community, spiritually accompanying the dying Friend and supporting their family through that process and through bereavement is an especially tender time for those giving or receiving pastoral care. In a pastoral meeting, the pastor usually has experience being spiritually present with the dying and bereaved, and typically carries much of this responsibility with the support of meeting Friends. In addition to its support of a dying Friend and their family, Ministry & Counsel needs to consider the impact on the meeting at the time of this loss. If there is to be a memorial minute, Ministry & Counsel arranges for that to be written. (*See chapters on Pastoral Care and on Death, Dying & Bereavement for a fuller explanation.*)

II.G.ii Conflict Transformation in the Meeting Community

37) Ministry & Counsel also has a significant community pastoral care role. It is important for the health of the meeting that it be sensitive to conflict, whether it is between a few individuals in meeting or one of wider concern, and promptly explore the sources. Such engagement requires an atmosphere of trust, respect, and truthfulness. Addressing conflicts is an opportunity for growth.

II.G.ii.a Interpersonal Conflict

38) When there is an interpersonal conflict and the individuals have not been able to resolve the difficulty privately, a Friend or small group of Friends facilitates listening in such a way that each person in the conflict is supported in hearing the concerns of the other. For such support to be successful, it is essential that all individuals involved in the conflict and its resolution be willing to engage in the process and be open to finding unity in the Spirit.

II.G.ii.b Addressing Tensions in the Meeting Community

39) The same willingness to engage in spiritually grounded dialogue applies to groups within the meeting that are at odds over a question or a path forward. If a tension over differences continues over a long period of time despite efforts to reach unity, and is widely known within the meeting community, it may be important for the meeting clerk or Ministry & Counsel to make a broad statement describing the problem and ask for the meeting's respectful and loving attention to the search for common ground and a way forward. These steps are especially important when a meeting is in discernment about a potential decision. Informational presentations can help the meeting clarify the issue. Listening sessions and threshing sessions can offer opportunities for the community to hear each other without the pressure to reach unity. A minute of exercise can lay out the range of viewpoints and

concerns raised in a threshing and summarize where the meeting finds itself on an issue (see *Extract 3.11*). If such opportunities do not lead to unity, Ministry & Counsel might reach out to the quarterly meeting or ask a weighty Friend from another meeting to clerk a session for the meeting. If the quarterly meeting does not have an active Ministry & Counsel, M&C may reach out to Yearly Meeting staff for suggestions or support. If an individual's issue is with Ministry & Counsel itself, the meeting turns to the quarterly meeting's Ministry & Counsel for assistance. (See *Appendix 5D for Listening Sessions, Threshing Sessions, and Minutes of Exercise*.)

40) It can happen that a Friend, or Friends, find themselves out of unity with a sense of the meeting. At these times Ministry & Counsel may exercise its pastoral care responsibility to meet with these Friends and, holding them in the Light, listen lovingly to their concerns, assuring them that they are heard. Quakers understand that Friends out of unity with the sense of the meeting may be a voice for a truth that has not yet been heard by the meeting.

41) With time and grace, there is sometimes a transformative process as the meeting settles into life after a decision that has been difficult. When hard feelings on the part of both sides of an issue fester instead of abate, however, a rift may form in the meeting that becomes a long-standing divide. Nothing is more humbling for peaceable Quakers than to face their own failings in getting along with each other. The process of dealing with conflict, whether resolved or not, may leave meetings themselves in need of pastoral care from the quarterly or Yearly Meeting.

II.G.ii.c The Concern for the Balance of Individual and Community Needs in the Meeting

42) Within a meeting the needs and desires of individuals are held in balance with the needs and integrity of the whole. While it is important to provide space for individual insight and for community growth, it is the work of love that the meeting ensure that no individual's needs, behaviors, or assertiveness dominate the meeting community. Sometimes it is the individual and sometimes it is the meeting that needs to move to a new understanding. Just as being aware of opportunities to provide pastoral care for individuals is a shared responsibility of every person in the community, so too is being alert to the pastoral care needs of the community as a whole.

II.H The Spiritual Condition of the Meeting & the State of Society Report

43) It is of vital importance that Ministry & Counsel remains aware of the spiritual state of the meeting. It also has a responsibility to help the meeting itself understand its strengths and challenges as a community. Any meeting—monthly, quarterly or yearly—benefits from a process of sitting together with queries, including ones that may lead to uncomfortable truths. Corporate discernment on its spiritual condition helps the community see how it has been led, how faithfully it has responded to challenges, and where it might need to focus its attention in the future. It helps bind the community and renew its sense of commitment.

44) Yearly Meeting may send queries to meetings to serve as prompts for this process, or a meeting may explore the way the Spirit is moving in its midst as it feels led. Traditionally

New England meetings have articulated their spiritual condition in an annual State of Society Report. Ministry & Counsel, or meeting members appointed by them, create the report, which is approved by Ministry & Counsel and presented at the monthly meeting for business for approval. Approved reports go to the quarterly and Yearly Meeting Ministry & Counsel.

45) Reports may cover the full range of interests and concerns but typically emphasize those indicative of the spiritual health of the meeting—both that which is thriving and that which is challenging and needs strengthening, such as:

- The quality of worship and vocal ministry
- The strength of the meeting community
- Efforts to foster spiritual growth and evidence of growth
- Possible tensions in the meeting, and how Friends are responding to those challenges
- Significant events or activities in the meeting’s year together
- Social justice concerns of the meeting and stands taken on Friends’ religious principles
- Participation in activities with Friends beyond the local meeting
- Relations with the community and other religious groups

46) The practice of local meetings reporting to their yearly meeting began early in England and was adopted by NEYM in the 18th century. Originally these reports were a response to questions, mainly factual, such as the number of Friends who had been imprisoned for their faith and died there, but there were also spiritual queries for meetings (“How has Truth prospered amongst you... and are Friends in peace and unity?”). NEYM has maintained a version of this tradition through two reports: the annual statistical reporting of membership changes and attendance at meetings, which is usually handled by the meeting’s Recorder, and Ministry & Counsel’s State of Society report, which focuses on the spiritual condition of the meeting.

II.I Recognizing and Nurturing Gifts, Leadings and Ministry

47) Ministry & Counsel seeks to identify, draw out, and encourage the gifts it sees in its community membership. Friends recognize that “to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good” (1 Corinthians 12:7); a person’s spiritual qualities are gifts not only to the individual but to the community as well. Ministry & Counsel reaches out to those friends whose gifts would support service opportunities in the meeting, and may draw Nominating Committee’s attention to its perception of gifts in a Friend. This drawing out of a gift is an affirmation of the spiritual life of the individual and the use of the gift within the meeting strengthens the community.

II.I.i Clearness and Support for Leadings and Ministries

48) Friends often experience being called by the Spirit to make choices that impact the way they live out their lives, both in their home and in the wider community. All Quakers are called to do God’s work, and while most inward promptings to action do not require the support of the meeting, any Friend may ask for a clearness committee. When Friends

experience a leading of the Spirit that leaves them unsettled on how to proceed, especially if following their leading involves representing themselves as Friends and takes them beyond the meeting itself, they are advised to ask Ministry & Counsel for a clearness committee to undertake discernment with them. These clearness committees help the Friend explore the spiritual grounding of the leading, identify possible next steps and tease apart the leading from ego-driven motivations. It may be that the work within the clearness committee brings the leading and the way forward into focus. Over time it may become clear that the leading is to a ministry, either within the Yearly Meeting, in wider Quaker circles, or beyond the Quaker world. The development of a leading into a ministry requires seasoning, reflection, considered action, and ongoing individual and corporate discernment.

49) Meetings choose to support members with ministries in various ways, including encouraging the Friend to form a relationship with an elder or spiritual companion. Ministry & Counsel may form a committee under its care to offer spiritual and sometimes practical support for a Friend carrying a ministry. In the past these committees were called oversight committees. Some meetings have kept the old Quaker usage but today these committees are increasingly coming to be known by different names such as spiritual care, care & accountability or anchor committees. Whatever the name, the purpose is the same: to help Friends be faithful to the leadings of the Spirit and help the meeting fulfill its responsibility to nurture the life of the Spirit in its members. In some instances, M&C might name committee members from beyond the meeting's membership to take advantage of wider experience and as a reflection that the nature of the work extends beyond the meeting. These care & accountability committees meet regularly to hold the Friend in the Light; to listen to them with prayerful attention; and help them be more sensitive and responsive to the Inward Guide. Their committee clerks take care that there is communication with Ministry & Counsel, which checks in regularly with the committee to be sure it is functioning well. *(See Appendix 5I for more on Care and Accountability Committees)*

50) Ministry is a gift of God, an expression of the Spirit in the life of the Friend, to be carried humbly and cheerfully in an attitude of service. Quakers understand that ministry can potentially come through any individual, not just those whose work is under the care of Ministry & Counsel. M&C affirms that truth, and seeks ways to express respect and value for all the ways its members serve the meeting, the Religious Society of Friends, and the wider society.

II.I.ii Public Ministry and the Released Friend

51) When the ministry is a public one, beyond the life of the monthly meeting, M&C will bring the care of the ministry to the business meeting. The calling to the ministry and the work of the clearness and care and accountability committees are laid before the meeting. If the meeting affirms this calling and takes the ministry under its care, the ministry comes into the embrace of Friends as part of the life of the meeting. M&C makes regular reports to the meeting concerning the ministry. The meeting may assist Friends with practical needs as well as with funding. When the meeting provides financial support for a ministry so that the

Friend is freed from the need to earn a living, the Friend is referred to as a Released Friend.
(See Appendix 5K for more on Released Friends.)

52) A monthly meeting's process of recognizing a ministry takes time and does not always go smoothly. Often meetings need background information about Friends' practice in supporting a ministry in order to proceed. Ministry & Counsel may need to articulate for the meeting why a ministry furthers the meeting's work in the world. There may be concerns about the Friend's personality or fitness for the tasks involved. A concern for financial support for the work introduces another layer for community discernment. A meeting that unites behind corporate support of a Friend and the work carried may be comfortable with one form of support and not others. It may, for example, approve a minute of religious service or a travel minute rather than release the Friend financially or record the gift in the ministry. Every meeting needs to develop its own approach to supporting leadings and ministries.

53) When the meeting takes a Friend with a ministry under its care, it does not imply that the Friend is speaking for the meeting as a whole or that the entire meeting is called to that particular witness. It means the meeting recognizes that the Friend is faithful and Spirit-led and, as an individual, is under the weight of a concern. The meeting is also affirming that it is prepared to provide spiritual and practical support as the Friend grows in faithfulness.

54) Members and attenders alike are encouraged to seek clearness about a potential leading and may be offered informal support by M&C; however, when Ministry & Counsel has taken an individual and their ministry formally under its care, it is expected that the individual is a member of the Religious Society of Friends.

II.I.iii Travel Minutes, Minutes of Denominational Support, and Minutes of Religious Service

55) It is often helpful for a Friend who is carrying a ministry to have a letter or a minute from their meeting expressing the meeting's support. These minutes of affirmation and support serve different needs and are time-limited. **Travel minutes** are written for a Friend's travel in the ministry for a specific occasion or set of visits. **Letters or Minutes of Denominational Endorsement** provide qualifying credentials for chaplains and others who need religious certification for their work; they are time-limited and renewable. **Minutes of Religious Service** affirm and describe a ministry carried by a Friend and name the ways the meeting is supporting the Friend and their work. Minutes of Religious Service are revisited by Ministry & Counsel at specified intervals, at which time they may be renewed, revised or laid down. They are held by a particular monthly meeting and are not transferable; if the Friend moves, the new meeting takes up its own consideration of the Friend's ministry. (See Appendix 5K for more information about these minutes, including samples.)

II.I.iv Recording of Gifts in Ministry

56) A Friend with knowledge of Quaker tradition and with a gift for consistently sharing Truth in a way that speaks meaningfully to others may be recorded as having a gift in ministry. Recording has traditionally been used for Friends who have sustained gifts in vocal ministry.

It is an affirmation, initiated by the monthly meeting and taken up by the quarterly meeting, that the individual's gift is not only locally helpful but also can be trusted to interpret the Religious Society of Friends to the wider community. With rare exception, the recording is held by the individual for their lifetime. Recorded ministers may serve on meeting's Ministry & Counsel through the same nominating process as any member of the meeting. In cases where a Friend appears to no longer manifest this gift, Ministry & Counsel discerns whether it is appropriate to recommend rescinding the recording. Some quarters in New England Yearly Meeting no longer record ministers. In those that do, some meetings do not participate in that process. All meetings, however, seek to encourage such gifts when they appear.

57) Initiating the potential recording of a gift in ministry is a serious undertaking. Recording carries the weight of clerical accreditation in other denominations and has legal ramifications such as adherence to clergy tax laws and the authority to officiate at weddings. The status of a recorded minister is transferable with a certificate of membership from one monthly meeting to another and from one yearly meeting to another. (See *Appendix 5K for details on procedure for recording.*)

II.J Ministry & Counsel's Relationship with a Pastor

58) A meeting may determine that their community is, or will be, helped to thrive more vigorously by inviting a Friend called by the Spirit to serve as pastor. A Friend who is released to follow such a vocation can provide a meeting with a consistent, intentional pastoral presence.

59) The pastor's role overlaps with the work of Ministry & Counsel when it comes to nurture and care of the community as a whole and of the individuals within it, especially in regard to spiritual nurture and accompaniment. It is customary for pastors to serve *ex-officio* on Ministry & Counsel. In meetings with a pastor, Ministry & Counsel still serves all the same functions and holds the same authority as in any other meeting. Pastors may be appreciated for their individual gifts and insights but do not have special authority within the meeting simply because of their role.

60) The relationship between pastor and Ministry & Counsel is one of mutual support and communication. Together they prayerfully discern the condition and needs of the meeting and of its members and arrange for those needs to be addressed. Such discernment will often inform the messages the pastor prepares for meetings for worship. Since part of the pastoral call is to teach, Ministry & Counsel may ask the pastor (or youth/family minister) to prepare or locate study materials and arrange programs. The pastor usually attends or keeps in close communication with all the committees of the meeting and is able to bring this comprehensive knowledge to M&C's deliberations, thereby helping maintain connections between the varying parts of the meeting.

61) It is often the pastor who takes the lead in public ministry such as memorial meetings and weddings and in situations where a pastoral role is helpful, such as times of crisis and

serious illness. It is also common for them to be a representative of the meeting to wider bodies of Friends, to ecumenical groups, and to the community at large.

II.J.i Finding a Pastor

62) On occasion a meeting might see gifts for pastoral ministry developing in one of its members, and help to draw it out by inviting them to serve as their pastor. No particular training or background is a requirement for pastoral ministry, nor is it expected that the pastor be a recorded minister. In most cases, a pastoral search committee is needed to find a pastor from outside the meeting, and this search originates in Ministry & Counsel. They may seek input from the Yearly Meeting on potential candidates. It is unlikely that a candidate will be equally gifted in all aspects of pastoral ministry: vocal ministry, teaching, administration, pastoral care, conflict transformation skills, loving presence and spiritual accompaniment. The committee's discernment involves considering the best match for the meeting based on the meeting's needs and the gifts carried by other members. It also considers the meeting's ability and willingness to support a particular pastor and the fullness of the ministry to which they are called. It is a weighty decision for all involved, requiring prayer and surrender to the guidance of the Spirit. On occasion meetings may call someone who is not a Friend to be their pastor. When this is the case, the meeting needs to undertake careful discernment of that person's understanding and acceptance of Quakerism. *(See Appendix 5L for guidance on the pastoral search process.)*

II.K When the Meeting is an Employer

63) At both the monthly and yearly meeting levels, a meeting's dealings with its employees is a testimony to what it considers to be living in right relationship. Whenever a monthly meeting employs a Friend to work in any role, such as pastor, youth minister, administrator, care coordinator, facilities manager or resident Friend, Ministry & Counsel is closely involved in both support for their ministry and supervision of their work. These are two different functions and are best served by different people or differing groups of people. The support committee for a remunerated ministry is the same as the support for other ministries in the meeting. Naming those who are carrying the supervisory task is important so that there is a clear understanding of the appropriate place for meeting members to express suggestions, concerns, and requests. Where there is a supervisory committee, it is recommended that the committee clerk be the person who speaks with the employee on behalf of the committee. *(See *to be written*.)*

64) A pastor is both a minister and an employee of the meeting, needing structures for support and for accountability. It may be desirable for the support committee to be formed from the wider Friends community rather than just from within the meeting. Since there are few pastors within NEYM, ecumenical and interfaith ministerial associations can also be a vital source of support.

65) The supervisor or supervisory committee, together with Ministry & Counsel, draws up and reviews contracts in consultation with employees. Together they agree upon duties and a fair compensation package. Contracts should include clear, detailed expectations for both

employee and meeting. They should include an understanding of the spiritual covenant involved as well as of practical considerations. There is mutual accountability between the meeting and its employees.

- 66) Recommendations for hiring, for the terms of a contract, or for terminating a contract are brought to the business meeting for a decision. The Finance Committee is asked to determine the financial impact of M&C's recommendations and bring this information to the decision-making process.

EXTRACTS

- 5.1 And let us consider how to provoke one another to love and good deeds, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another.

Hebrews 10:24-25, New Revised Standard Version

- 5.2 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, if there has been any slip or fall; and waiting till the Lord gives sense and repentance, if sense and repentance in any be wanting. Oh! wait to feel this spirit, and to be guided to walk in this spirit, that ye may enjoy the Lord in sweetness, and walk sweetly, meekly, tenderly, peaceably, and lovingly one with another.

Isaac Penington, 1667

- 5.3 In each of our Friends Meetings—regardless of the form of our worship—there are Friends to whom God has given a heart for this particular people; this particular community. Such Friends feel called to walk lovingly alongside individuals and encourage them in their spiritual development. They also hold a particular concern for the wellbeing of the Meeting as a body. Each Friend brings gifts to the ecosystem of the Meeting. Those with specifically pastoral gifts find laid upon their hearts the health of the whole, and they express this calling in a variety of ways which may include vocal ministry, spiritual accompaniment and encouragement, pastoral care, teaching, conflict resolution and facilitating the ongoing connectedness of the Meeting community. They hold “the big picture”.

Maggie Edmondson, 2018

- 5.4 Let each be tender of the reputation of his brother; let every one be earnest to possess the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit. Watch over one another for good, but not for evil; and whilst not blind to the faults or false views of others, be especially careful not to make them a topic of common conversation. And even in cases in which occasion may require that the failings of others should be disclosed, be well satisfied, before they are made the subject of confidential communication, either verbally or by letter, that your own motives are sufficiently pure.

586 5.5 A welcoming space for me is one where we meet people where they are and bring them
 587 into whatever is happening. An inclusive space recognizes the intrinsic worth of each of
 588 the members. We have to recognize the things that we are doing that create barriers to
 589 people bringing their whole selves.

590

Mary Linda McKinney, 2021

591 5.6it seemed to me that there was this liberty of the Spirit that really was at the root of
 592 Quakerism, but as Quakerism developed and developed among a particular race and a
 593 particular class over time—different from the class that it started with—then Quaker
 594 meeting began to kind of perform itself in a way that was very cerebral and reflected the
 595 cultural orientation of the white, middle class folk who had gathered.

596 And though I found that to be a rich experience, I also believed that I wasn't operating in
 597 the liberty that the Spirit had set me free in... that I was not following the Spirit in the
 598 ways that I was always led to, because I was afraid of not being accepted. [Worshipping
 599 with The Fellowship of Friends of African Descent was a] Coming home in terms of
 600 finding this space in the Spirit where we really felt that we could be who we were, and
 601 that we could just open the ancestral floodgates and allow our experience as a people to
 602 enter into this worship space.

603 When we began to come together, we began to experiment with freedom—that it was
 604 ok to laugh when someone was funny, that it was ok to say “amen” or “ashe,” that it was
 605 ok to clap your hands or click your fingers. That it was ok, if someone started a song, for
 606 you to jump in with some harmony on that.

607 So we're still on that journey of saying, “There's a liberty of the Spirit that we've been
 608 given, and we also want to give that liberty back to God.” And as God has made us free to
 609 say, “God, you can cut up a little in this space! You can be free in this space. You don't
 610 have to be limited by these particular cultural expectations.”

611

Ayesha Imani, 2019

612 5.7 The nurturing aspects of eldering as truth speaking lie in the recognition that one can be
 613 definite without being dogmatic. Elders should stand ready to state definitely and with
 614 candor their experience of things, without needing to insist that others conform their
 615 thinking and behavior to their views. In all cases of truth speaking, the first motion must
 616 be love. It is the power and integrity of love as it shows through one's life that must do
 617 the convincing in the end.

618

Sam Caldwell, 1983

619 5.8 Contemporary society has such a strong individualistic bent that persons coming new
 620 among Friends, while bringing a strong hunger for community, for spiritual community,
 621 have little idea of what that community will look like or how it may affect their personal
 622 lives. Even those of us who have been fortunate in growing up in fairly strong Friends

communities — and there are fewer and fewer of us — have been influenced by the individualism of the time and need continually to hone our awareness of what the meeting community might ideally be, and continually work towards strengthening it.

The Conservative Friend, 1996

5.9 We need to recapture the sense that we are indeed working with God and to keep our hearts and minds open to his leadings — for he careth for us all and not one of us is in need but he knows. If we keep this attitude of receptive dependence we shall be ready to obey his promptings, we shall become aware of the needs of our fellow members and be prepared in his strength to play our part in helping all our members to find their right place in the life of our Meeting.

Stephen J. Thorne, 1959

5.10 “Our aged Friend, Joseph Hoag, with his companion, —— Battey, in the course of a religious visit, was at my house, and I remember a remark having been made, that there was some danger even to rightly anointed ministers, of preaching too much; and an instance was related of that valuable Friend, Daniel Haviland, in illustration of this danger, as follows:

“Daniel having felt a concern to attend a neighboring meeting, took his daughter, the late Hannah Wanzer, with him, who was then a child of about nine years of age. In this meeting he was largely engaged in the ministry, and apparently to his own satisfaction; but on their way home, he observed that his child seemed deeply and sorrowfully affected, and as she sighed heavily, and shed many tears, Daniel asked her what affected her so much. She looked up into his face and said, ‘Oh, father, I do fear thee preached too much this morning!’ Her father in surprise, exclaimed, ‘Why, Hannah, what dost thou mean?’ To which the child replied, ‘I was very much comforted with what thou told us in the first part of thy discourse; my heart went along with thee, and I seemed even to know what thee was going to say, and I was very glad I went to meeting with thee; but when thee changed the subject, I could not go with thee, my heart became dark and sad, and the more thee preached the more sad I felt, and my mind became so troubled that I could not help weeping, and could scarcely keep my seat on the bench, and Oh! Father, it does seem to me that thee ought to have stopped when thee got through that first subject.’ Daniel rode on in solemn silence, beside the sorrowing child, for a long time, and then laying his hand on the little girl’s head, he said, “My daughter, flesh and blood hath not revealed this unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven! I am now favored to see that I missed my Guide, and that I ought to have stopped where thou pointed out.”

Joseph Hoag, 1909

5.11 Over a period of time when our meeting was discussing a controversial matter, business sessions became increasingly contentious, featuring rude exchanges between some outspoken members. The clerk attempted to address the issue in a general way during business meeting by reading relevant advices and queries, and reminding those present of the worshipful attitude with which we are called to conduct our business. The Friends

were also approached by Ministry & Counsel with direct and respectful requests for a change in tone. Nothing seemed to work. Finally M&C reached out to the Yearly Meeting staff for advice. Rather than counsel, however, we received an unexpected form of support. For the next two months of business meetings, the Field Secretary worshipped with us in the morning and sat through our business meetings in the afternoon, never saying a word. His centered, silent presence was what we needed: our meeting returned to civility and regard for the experience of others as we wrestled with the issue together.

Carolyn Hilles-Pilant, 2020

- 5.12 At our meeting this month Ministry and Counsel cluster minuted the following as part of our discussion of how we might help the meeting become a whole and healed community:

“It seems our purpose is to work to clear the conduits to enable love to flow between and among us. It would help if we create a culture in which we all give each other credit for being in good faith. We need to love one another so much that each feels safe enough to let go, and open, and grow. It is laid upon the members of Ministry and Counsel to begin living more overt love with one another.”

We bring this to the entire meeting in the hope that you will also take this charge seriously. We ask that every one of you support the members of M&C as we strive to be leaders in the work of love in the meeting, and we ask further that you join us out on this limb and see whether we can’t make some progress toward more profound love for each other in the Spirit. It is only in this way that we will be able to put aside irritations, forgive injuries, and come together to live into our radical mission to embody the Divine community.

Wellesley Friends at Meeting for Business from Ministry and Counsel, 2018

Extract Citations

- 5.1 Hebrews 10:24-25, New Revised Standard Version.
- 5.2 Isaac Pennington, *Letters*, ed John Barclay, 1828, p 139; 3rd edn, 1844, p 138 (Letter LII, to Friends in Amersham, dated Aylesbury, 4 iii [May] 1667).
- 5.3 Maggie Edmondson, in NEYM’s invitation to “Tending the Flock”, a retreat for NEYM and NYM Friends with gifts in pastoral ministry, 2018.
- 5.4 Epistles from the Yearly Meeting of Friends, held in London, 1858, Edward Marsh, Friends’ Book and Tract Depository, 84, Houndsditch, vol. II, pages 258-259.
- 5.5 Mary Linda McKinney, QuakerSpeak, May 27, 2021
- 5.6 Ayesha Imani, QuakerSpeak, March 28, 2019
- 5.7 Sam Caldwell, “The Nurturing Aspects of Eldering”, 1983, *Quaker Life*, Jan-Feb, page 16.
- 5.8 Author?, “Applying and Adapting the Tradition of Eldering for Today”, 1996, *The Conservative Friend*, 1996, p. 3
- 5.9 Stephen J. Thorne, *Christian Faith and Practice in the Experience of the Society of Friends*, 1965, London Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends, #348.

- 5.10 Joseph Hoag, *Journal of the Life of Joseph Hoag*, 1909, Press of Wm. H. Pile's Sons, 122 Walnut Street, Philadelphia, pp 332-335.
- 5.11 Carolyn Hilles-Pilant, anecdote shared during a Faith & Practice Revision Committee discussion, 2020.
- 5.12 Unpublished, Minute reported to Wellesley Friends at Meeting for Business from Ministry and Counsel on Fifth Month 10, 2018.

ADVICES AND QUERIES FOR MINISTRY & COUNSEL

I. Advices for Ministry & Counsel

1. Be faithful in gathering together, encouraging, supporting and watching over one another in love.
2. Maintain an active spiritual life, staying grounded in God.
3. The responsibilities of Ministry & Counsel are the same no matter what the size of the meeting. Discern how to structure those responsibilities in a way that will best serve your meeting.
4. Pay attention to the meeting community as a whole and to individuals within it, supporting them with constructive eldering.
5. Regularly introduce members of Ministry & Counsel after meeting for worship. Let those present know what M&C does, and that its members are available to give information, to assist, or to hear concerns.
6. Maintain transparent communication with the meeting community so that meeting members may feel confident in the work of their Ministry & Counsel.
7. Be mindful of the quality of worship. Be prepared to intervene and provide guidance when necessary.
8. Remember that welcome is not conveyed simply by words, nor is it only the work of a particular committee. Welcome is a culture of hospitality that permeates all aspects of a meeting's life.
9. Explore practical solutions that will help make the meeting inclusive for all Friends.
10. Support meetings for business and committee meetings with prayer.
11. Listen and discern what God is asking of the meeting.
12. Listen for movement of the Spirit in the community and provide opportunities to support spiritual growth.
13. Be prompt in arranging clearness and support committees as the need arises.
14. Be alert to tension or disruptive behavior. Seek to resolve conflict sooner rather than later, remembering that conflict can be an opportunity for growth and transformation.
15. Be mindful of the value of listening and threshing sessions.

II. Queries for Ministry & Counsel

(These queries are grouped according to the headings within the chapter.)

Introduction

1. Have we kept Friends' beliefs and the reasons for our practices clearly before our members? How?

Friends Who Serve on Ministry & Counsel

2. What is each of us doing to deepen our own spiritual understanding and sensitivity?
3. How do we help each other grow in divine obedience?
4. What are we doing to support each other in the use of our gifts for God's work? Do we actively seek to identify and nurture these gifts in each other?
5. Do all M&C members regularly attend meetings for worship and business?
6. Do members of M&C discern how much they can take on? How do we support each other in these choices? Do the members of Ministry & Counsel regularly take time for refreshment?
7. Do we admit errors and learn from them? Do we avoid blaming or scapegoating when there are problems?

Structuring the Work of Ministry & Counsel

8. What structures best fit the community for implementing the functions of M&C?

The Word of Ministry & Counsel

9. Has the Inward Teacher been leading M&C in its work?
10. Is the work given to M&C appropriate for it? Does it belong elsewhere?
11. Does M&C take on too much?

Care of Worship

12. Is the quality of worship deep and Spirit-led? Does it allow for sinking down to the Seed?
13. Are we being faithful to the work of nurturing the meeting's worship and encouraging personal devotions?
14. How do we encourage faithful vocal ministry and an understanding of its practice?
15. Does Ministry & Counsel hold the worshiping community in prayer?
16. Do we follow up with Friends whose vocal ministry we have felt to be from the prompting of the Spirit, encouraging them to continue to be faithful?
17. Do we engage sensitively with Friends whose vocal ministry does not seem centered in the Spirit? Do we have a plan for addressing disruptive messages during worship?

18. What have we each done to encourage people new to our meeting to know, love, and experience the centering peace and power of the Inward Guide and to embrace its challenges?

19. Are we careful to use accessible language, avoiding terms that assume everyone is from a similar background and familiar with Quaker terminology? Are we careful to explain Quaker jargon and acronyms if necessary?

20. Do we follow up with inquiries about, and visitors to, our meetings? What else might we do so that visitors feel welcome?

21. Have we offered spiritual and practical support to those new to the meeting? How have we encouraged their acceptance into the fabric of the meeting? Where have we fallen short?

Support of Corporate Discernment

22. How has Ministry & Counsel's supported the meeting's corporate discernment? Are meetings for business and committee meetings spiritually centered and focused on discerning God's will?

Spiritual Nurture & Religious Education

23. Does the community need to be renewed, refreshed, disciplined or enlivened? How can these needs be addressed?

24. How is M&C nurturing the spiritual life of individuals? Is there evidence of growth among members of all ages?

25. How can we integrate children and young people more fully in the life of the meeting? How are we meeting their needs?

26. Is our meeting aware of the needs of our wider community? What are we doing to help address them?

27. Does our witness in the world inspire seekers to discover a spiritual home with Friends?

28. What is God asking of the meeting?

Clearness

29. How do we encourage members to bring their life and decisions into the Light of God's love, seeking Spirit-led guidance?

Membership

30. Are there attenders we might encourage to consider membership?

31. Have we engaged with members who do not regularly attend our meetings? Have we visited those who live locally and are able to attend, and encouraged them to come to meeting?

32. Have we visited, phoned, and written with spiritual support to members who are not able to attend or live far away? What have we learned from these communications, and how have we responded?

Pastoral Care

33. What visits have we each paid to families and individuals active in our meetings? To Friends who are sick, shut-ins, or residents of retirement homes?

34. Are we ready to celebrate joys as well as help with difficulties?

35. What do we each do to make ourselves available to members, attenders, and young people who wish to talk with us? Do we protect the confidentiality of those who speak privately with us? How?

Conflict Transformation

36. Do we find ourselves paralyzed by the fear of conflict in our Meetings? Can we acknowledge conflict as an opportunity for transformation?

37. Do we recognize that many of our individual differences are gifts to our community? Are we aware of how respectful disagreement and understanding can deepen our individual and corporate growth in the Spirit?

38. When significant disagreements arise, do we engage in careful discernment of God's will and do we have the courage to act based on that discernment in a timely manner?

39. When facing difficult issues, how do we support each other, and any other parties involved, in a loving spirit?

40. Do we intentionally stand together, focused on God's solution rather than worldly expediency?

41. Do we acknowledge, together, the barriers to resolution, and trust God to support us in uncomfortable places?

42. When there is conflict or difficulty, do we actively protect the integrity of the meeting for worship, support individuals, and take care of the fabric of the meeting community?

43. How do we balance care for the individual with care for the meeting community? How do we respond when an individual's calling or need dominates the life of the meeting?

Recognizing and Nurturing Gifts, Leadings & Ministry

44. Have we sensed a developing gift of ministry, eldering, or pastoral care in any of our meetings' members?

45. What have we done to encourage the development of the gifts of those in our meeting? What else might the Spirit be calling us to do?

Ministry & Counsel's Relationship with a Pastor or Other Employee

46. Might the meeting benefit from a consistent pastoral presence? Why might the meeting want to employ a Friend for a particular ministry and why not?

47. If the meeting has a pastor or other employee, is that Friend provided with spiritual and practical support? Are expectations clear, and is there a Friend designated to communicate officially as supervisor with any employee? Is Ministry & Counsel

842 represented on any committees charged with care or oversight of the pastor or other
843 employee?

844 48. Have you considered what it means to be in right relationship with anyone employed by
845 your meeting?

846 APPENDIX TO CHAPTER 5

847 5A. Care of Worship Tools

- 848 1. A few members of M&C may arrive early to the meeting room so that as others arrive
849 they enter into a worshipful silence.
- 850 2. At times of particular stress in the meeting community or in the wider world, opening
851 worship with words of comfort and assurance may be helpful.
- 852 3. M&C may encourage a time of Afterwords or Afterthoughts in which attenders share
853 thoughts that did not rise to the level of a message during worship. This practice offers
854 an opportunity for all present to know one another better, strengthening the spiritual
855 community.
- 856 4. If the vocal ministry in meeting becomes discursive with little space between speakers, a
857 member of M&C may rise and stand in silence to return the meeting to silent
858 communion.
- 859 5. If there is a serious concern about the vocal ministry or other actions of someone in the
860 meeting, it is a good practice to check with another member of M&C or a trusted and
861 experienced member of the meeting to discern together what to do. In some cases, two
862 might approach the Friend, one effectively serving as elder for the other who addresses
863 the issue; this practice may prevent the Friend from interpreting the comments as
864 personal criticism.
- 865 6. Meetings may wish to consider an intergenerational worship program, bringing the
866 adult members of the meeting together with the children. Such worship programs may
867 have songs, a story or presentation, a query for all attenders to speak to, or worship
868 sharing on a topic, along with times of silent worship.

869 5B. The Welcoming Meeting

870 M&C ensures that the meetinghouse is handicapped accessible, offers gender-neutral
871 bathrooms, and provides appropriate spaces for children's activities. Care should be taken that
872 the meeting room is properly equipped for the hearing impaired.

873 Readily available written materials in the entryway introduce newcomers to the meeting
874 community, its services and its child care programs. A pamphlet in the entryway or on benches
875 in the meeting room may describe the worship service and the qualities of a worshipful
876 meeting and the ways Quakers come to know when they are led by the Spirit to speak.

5C. Queries on Confidentiality & Openness

Both confidentiality and openness are important in the life of a meeting, yet there is a potential conflict between them. These two issues are often not openly addressed in many meetings. Here are some queries that may encourage discussion and discernment.

1. Do we listen to God's voice for the right balance between confidentiality and openness?
2. How can we create places of safety within the meeting family where tender emotional and spiritual needs can be met?
3. Is each one of us careful of the reputation of others?
4. In applying the expectation of confidentiality that is needed to protect privacy, do we avoid unnecessary secrecy that would hinder appropriate help?
5. When relating an experience or incident, do we tell our own story rather than repeating another's?
6. Are we aware of the danger of sub-groups gathering in confidentiality and creating pools of secrecy within a meeting?
7. Are we careful when setting up structures or rules of confidentiality that we not exclude people unnecessarily?
8. Are we careful to explain ground rules involving confidentiality and the reasons for them at the beginning of a meeting?
9. Do we cherish openness and vulnerability within the faith community that we may be known to each other as well as by God?
10. Do we consider that openness both in our meetings and in our lives is an aspect of our testimony of integrity?

(Based on: *Queries on Confidentiality & Openness* by Doug Armstrong, Susan Bailey, Peter Blood-Patterson, Pamela Haines, Paulette Meier, Susan Smith and Eleanor Warnock. Barnesville, Ohio, June 28, 2007. Source: http://www.inwardlight.org/queries_on_confidentiality_openness.html)

5D. Conflict Transformation in the Meeting Community

When a meeting is faced with complex or potentially contentious matter, the meeting may want to hold called meetings at which issues are raised without any pressure to make a decision.

Such called meetings may take several different forms, as described below. These types of meetings can give Friends the time they need to reach as clear a vision of the issue as possible and can create the opportunity for Friends to listen to each other — and to the Spirit. Ministry & Counsel may not be responsible for an issue under discernment by the meeting, but it has spiritual care of the meeting throughout the process, helping to keep the meeting centered, prayerfully and lovingly, through what may be a challenging time.

Informational Session

The meeting will need a clear and balanced overview of the facts related to the issue at hand. Usually a committee or working group is responsible for presenting a topic for consideration or for drafting a proposal. The issue is presented neutrally, along with all relevant information, possible options, and known ramifications. The meeting has an opportunity to ask clarifying questions.

Listening Session

A listening session may be called after informational opportunities have taken place, or after the meeting has had a chance to read any relevant documentation. It is a time for each Friend to speak from the heart and for the community to listen with open hearts and open minds. Friends do not discuss or argue for their points of view, or rebut other's contributions. Each Friend present is given an opportunity to speak before any speaks again.

No formal record is kept of what is said. The meeting ends with Friends having heard each other. Sometimes one Listening Session is all that is needed on a topic. If there appears to be no emerging unity about a proposal at this time, Friends know they have time to hold and season what they have heard, and that there will be other opportunities to explore the topic together.

Threshing Session

A threshing session is focused on determining how the meeting can move forward on a sensitive topic about which the meeting has been learning and listening to each other over a period of time. All relevant information has been updated and options can be laid out clearly. If needed, an experienced Friend from another meeting may be invited to clerk the threshing session.

After a straightforward presentation of the question at hand, the meeting hears all the concerns about the issue that Friends are carrying. The clerk is listening for what the meeting can say in unity and identifying where Friends hold divergent points of view. This time a record may be kept of some of what has been said (without giving names of Friends), especially if it seems as if Friends are getting clearer about how to proceed. Again, no decision is made at this time, but the recording clerk for the session writes a minute, in neutral terms, that records the main ideas that were raised, aspects of the issue that will need to be explored further, and places of unity. The threshing session may recommend to business meeting that it create a minute of exercise based on the minute created at the threshing session.

Minute of Exercise (sometimes called a Process Minute)

The meeting may wish to approve a minute of exercise in the absence of full unity. A minute of exercise is intended to mark a point along the way towards a decision. Such a minute articulates what the meeting has thus far discerned with clear unity and, often in a confessional manner, acknowledges that the meeting is under the burden of a concern, has not yet reached a decision, and is continuing to seek a way forward. The minute records those points on which

the meeting has reached clear unity and states plainly the concerns that are still under discernment. It should state the issue and the range of responses to it in neutral terms. It gives the meeting a record of the issue, the date(s) it was discussed, and the various approaches or objections to it. Such an articulation may prove transformational to Friends as they continue to discern God's will.

5E. Guidance for a Clearness Committee for Personal Discernment

A clearness committee for personal discernment meets with a person who is questioning how to proceed in a keenly felt concern or dilemma, hoping that it can help that person reach clarity. It may be an individual, a couple, or a group of people who are seeking clarity. In a clearness committee with more than one focus person, the committee may need to facilitate communication. Based on the confidence that each individual can access the Inner Teacher for guidance, the Friends on the clearness committee seek to draw out the Spirit's guidance from and for that person. The committee members' purpose is not to give advice or to "fix" the situation; their task is to listen, setting aside their own prejudices, and to provide emotional space for an individual to seek truth and recognize the right course of action. The clearness committee works best when everyone approaches this time of searching prayerfully, which need not exclude an element of playfulness.

Organizing the clearness committee

The person seeking clearness always initiates the request to form a committee, though a Friend may ask, "Would a clearness committee be helpful?" The request is brought to Ministry & Counsel, which forms a committee. Usually, at least one member of M&C serves on such a committee. The person may be invited to suggest people they feel may be helpful on the committee. Ministry & Counsel appoints a convener of the first meeting. It is strongly advised that the clearness committee names a clerk and a scribe before the first meeting.

In advance of the meeting, it is helpful for the person seeking clearness to describe the matter in writing, identifying it as clearly as they are able and giving relevant background information.

Conducting the clearness committee

The clerk opens the meeting, and affirms the guidelines to be followed. They are also responsible for keeping a right sense of order and for closing the meeting. Any member of the committee may intervene if necessary to ensure that guidelines are followed. The scribe writes down the questions asked and perhaps some of the responses and gives this record to the person seeking clearness after the meeting.

1. The clerk reminds everyone of the guidelines to be followed and makes sure there is a common understanding of the degree of confidentiality about the meeting.
2. All settle into a period of centering silence.

- 986 3. When ready, the person seeking clearness begins with a brief summary of the question
987 or concern.
- 988 4. Members of the clearness committee hold to a discipline of asking brief, probing
989 questions as led by the Spirit, resisting urges to present solutions or give advice. It is
990 crucial that these questions be asked not for the sake of satisfying the questioner's
991 curiosity, but for the sake of drawing out the person's clarity. The pace of questions
992 should be kept deliberately gentle and relaxed to encourage reflection. Committee
993 members should also trust their intuitions. Even if a question seems odd, if it feels
994 insistent it should be asked.
- 995 5. The person seeking clearness normally answers the questions in front of the group and
996 the responses generate more questions. It is always the person's absolute right not to
997 answer. The more often a person can answer, the more they and the committee have to
998 go on, but this should never be done at the expense of the person's privacy or need to
999 protect vulnerable feelings. It is a good idea for the person seeking clearness to keep
1000 answers fairly brief so that time remains for more discernment.
- 1001 6. Do not be anxious if there are extended periods of silence. It does not mean that
1002 nothing is happening; in fact, the Spirit may be powerfully at work within the person
1003 seeking clearness and the committee members.
- 1004 7. Well before the end of the session, following at least half an hour of questions and
1005 answers, the clerk pauses to ask the person how they wish to proceed. This is an
1006 opportunity for the person to choose, if it feels appropriate, a mode of seeking clarity
1007 other than questions. The scribe may continue to record during this time. Possibilities
1008 include:
- 1009 • Gathering into silence out of which anyone may speak
 - 1010 • People sharing images that have risen up for them
 - 1011 • Continued questions from the committee
 - 1012 • Questions to the committee from the person seeking clearness
 - 1013 • Reflection on what has been said
 - 1014 • Affirmation of the person's gifts
- 1015 8. Before the session ends the person may choose to share any clarity that has come to
1016 them. There should also be an opportunity to hear whether all hearts are clear and
1017 settled in the matter, or if any feel a stop. The person and the committee consider
1018 together whether another meeting is needed and, if so, schedule it at this time. It may
1019 be that the person will not need to meet with the committee again. Or, if needed, M&C
1020 may appoint an care and accountability committee to help the person remain clear
1021 and/or be accountable to their discernment. Members of the clearness committee may
1022 offer to serve on such committees.
- 1023 9. The clearness committee reports back to M&C that appointed it saying they have met
1024 and the work is complete or is still in process.

5F. Advices and Queries for Those Who Serve on Clearness Committees

Advices for Those Who Serve on Clearness Committees

1. Remember that each member of the committee shares responsibility for maintaining a prayerful presence, asking for times of silence when needed, and asking questions as led by the Spirit. A clearness committee is not an occasion to provide counseling but a spiritual exercise which aims to help the person or people requesting clearness to hear the Spirit's guidance for themselves. Don't offer solutions or advice but ask honest, probing questions to assist them in this process. Listen deeply to all that is said.
2. Give equal attention to each person seeking clearness when the meeting is for more than one person.
3. Focus on the situation that is prompting the need for discernment.
4. Remember that people are capable of change and growth.

Queries for Those Who Serve on Clearness Committees

1. Is this your work to do at this time?
2. Can you devote sufficient time and energy to this committee, knowing that it may take several meetings?
3. Do you feel sufficiently at ease with the person seeking clearness and with the other members of the committee to work with them? Can you engage with them to provide an atmosphere in which divine guidance can be sought?
4. If clearness is being sought by two or more people, can you set aside your own prejudice or bias as you listen to each person involved?
5. Are you ready to keep the committee discussions confidential unless those requesting the help of the committee are comfortable with a wider sharing?
6. Can you keep an open mind and an open heart about the outcome?

5G. Support Committees

Support committees are formed to provide practical, emotional and/or spiritual care, and serve as long as needed. Committees may be formed to support a couple, a family, or an individual Friend. Mental or emotional difficulties, a life transition, and the processes of dying or bereavement are some of the reasons Friends ask for meeting care. The size and composition of the committee varies according to need. Sometimes they are confidential and in other cases they are known to the community. In those instances, the committee might coordinate assistance from others in the meeting, such as preparing meals for a family after the birth of a new baby, or providing rides for a Friend undergoing medical treatment. For these committees, it is helpful to have one Friend designated as the coordinator for managing the schedule for

those offering help. If no member of Ministry & Counsel is serving on a support committee, it is helpful for one committee member to be named as the liaison to M&C. Support committees are intended to be time-limited. Any concerns, including the belief that professional help is needed, can be taken to M&C for discernment.

5H. Advices and Queries for Those Who Serve on Support Committees

Advices for Those Who Serve on Support Committees

1. Respect and be present to the person in need without imposing your own judgment.
2. Listen with compassion to the Friend's account of the situation and the Friend's deepest concerns. Douglas Steere suggests that, "To 'listen' another's soul into a condition of disclosure and discovery may be almost the greatest service that any human being ever performs for another."

Queries for Those Who Serve on Support Committees

1. Are you ready to help the person in need turn the situation over to the Spirit without expectation but in the hope that "way will open" for a solution to be found?
2. Are you prepared to assist the person in finding professional help, if this seems to be required?

5I. Care & Accountability Committees

Care & Accountability committees are appointed by Ministry & Counsel to support those the meeting has recognized as having spiritual gifts or who are pursuing a leading or engaged in the work of ministry. Members of Care & Accountability committees are selected by M&C in consultation with the individual being supported. The purpose of the committee is twofold:

- To provide sustained support, loving guidance, and accountability to a Friend who labors with a leading
- To help the faith community fulfill its charge and obligation to develop and support spiritual growth in its membership and to utilize the gifts given in service to the community by God

The form of the support should be determined by the needs of the Friend. Since the gift is given to the meeting through the Friend, the meeting is accountable for supporting the faithfulness and spiritual health of that Friend. What does that Friend need for preparation, refreshment and counsel? The committee and the Friend consider together the work and service of the individual and how to best provide support. Queries may be developed by the group, or found elsewhere.

5J. Advices and Queries for Those Who Serve on Care & Accountability Committees

Advices for Those Who Serve on Care & Accountability Committees

1. Be grounded in God and open to further learning and spiritual development, both for the Friend and for yourself.
2. Have faith in the divine-human relationship.
3. Be able to accept where the Friend is in the present moment. Maintain appropriate confidentiality, recognizing that the Friend's views and concerns may be in considerable flux during the journey.
4. Be willing and able to devote the time necessary to prepare yourself to carry out the committee's tasks and to attend the regular meetings with the minister Friend.

Queries for Those Who Serve on Care and Accountability Committees

1. Do you mirror for the Friend the ways you see God acting, speaking, and serving through them?
2. Do you accompany the Friend in personal places of spiritual desolation and fear?
3. Can you lovingly challenge the Friend to live more deeply into their ministry and gifts so that they may grow in the measure of faithfulness they are given? Are you clear in your own mind that "being more faithful" does not in itself mean "doing more," and sometimes calls for doing less?
4. Are you participating in evaluating the process and the function of the committee with some regularity?

Queries for the Friend who is the focus of the Care and Accountability Committee

1. Do you continually submit your gift for its use under the authority of divine guidance?
2. Do you humbly consider the possibility that the wisdom and guidance of other Friends may be needed to train and enrich the fullest expression of the gift entrusted to you for the benefit of the community?
3. How are you being formed for this ministry? Reflect upon your inner life, and your struggles and joys in this work, both spiritual & emotional. Are you seeking the support you need to sustain your service?

(Appendices 5I and 5J: With gratitude to the pamphlet *The Spiritual Care Committee*, The School of the Spirit, 2012.)

5K. Recognition of Gifts and Leadings

Letter of Introduction

Friends planning to visit other Quaker meetings may ask the monthly meeting clerk for a letter of introduction, stating the nature of their travel and their connection with their home meeting. The letter may apply to either a single trip or, in the case of a Friend who travels frequently, several journeys.

As no clearness committee process or approval by the monthly meeting is required, the clerk may simply write the letter, although as a matter of courtesy the clerk may wish to inform the monthly meeting when a letter has been requested and provided.

A letter of introduction states (along with other details that may be added):

- The name of the traveling Friend
- That the Friend is a member or attender of the meeting providing the letter
- The signature of the clerk

No endorsement is expected; the letter remains with the Friend who carried it.

Sample letter of introduction

[Meeting letterhead and date]

Dear Friends,

We send you warm greetings with our member ____ (Name) ____.

____ (Name) ____ spent many years in Ramallah, and has recently written a book about her experience there. We find the combination of her global perspective on life and her in-depth knowledge of Quakerism a wonderful asset to our meeting. We are confident you will enjoy her presence at the annual session of your yearly meeting.

We look forward to hearing from her about how the Spirit is moving among Friends in your yearly meeting.

In Peace,

(Signature)_____, clerk, Monthly Meeting (date)

Minutes for Travel Under a Concern or in the Ministry

A Friend feeling led to travel under a spiritual concern or in the ministry may find that it is helpful to carry a travel minute issued by the monthly meeting for business. The travel minute serves as an introduction of the traveling Friend to meetings that are visited for the purpose of sharing the concern or ministry. It also provides any pertinent information about the meeting's interest in and support of the Friend's concern. A travel minute may be directed to one particular visit or event, or written to cover a period of time.

1. The Friend seeking a travel minute requests such from the clerk of Ministry & Counsel or directly from the monthly meeting clerk, depending on the practice of the particular meeting.

2. A clearness process is required if the Friend is not in the care of a committee where such discernment takes place. How the clearness committee is formed and by whom varies from meeting to meeting, but it is typically either Ministry & Counsel or the meeting for business. The clearness committee may report first to M&C or directly to the meeting for business, again depending on the practice of the particular meeting.
3. Monthly meeting discerns whether to approve a travel minute, which is typically written by the traveling Friend's clearness or care and accountability committee or by the meeting clerk, who signs all travel minutes.
4. The minute includes:
- The name of the Friend traveling
 - An expression of the meeting's endorsement of the travel under concern or in the ministry
 - The date and signature of the monthly meeting clerk and, if applicable, the endorsement of the quarterly meeting and Permanent Board.
5. If the Friend requesting a minute plans to travel outside of their quarter, then the minute must also be endorsed by the quarterly meeting. In the case of travel outside the Yearly Meeting, the minute must be further endorsed by the Permanent Board.
6. A travel minute is presented for endorsement to each of the meetings visited. When appropriate, the traveling Friend will report back to Ministry & Counsel any pertinent details of visit and any return greetings or information. The minute is returned to monthly meeting upon the Friend's return.

Sample minute for travel under a concern

[Meeting letterhead and date]

Dear Friends,

____(Name)____, a long-time member of ____ Monthly Meeting of New England Yearly Meeting, is traveling under a concern for environmental justice. Our Meeting has participated in several of his workshop presentations and has worshipfully considered his leading to travel among Friends with the purpose to share his concern and to seek the Light among Friends. We believe him to be genuinely called to this work and that you will benefit, as we have, from his insights and from the experience of faithful prayer together.

Friend ____ (Name)____ plans to travel in this ministry between (date) and (date). We commend him to your care and hospitality.

Approved and minuted at ____ Meeting for Business

____(Signature)____, clerk

(For travel within the quarter)

Endorsed by ____ Quarterly Meeting, (date)

____(Signature)____, clerk

(For travel outside NEYM)

1202 _____(Signature)____, clerk

1204 [Meeting letterhead and date]

1206 _____ Monthly Meeting of Friends is united in recommending _____(Name)_____ to your care during
1207 her travels among Friends in Cuba Yearly Meeting. We have tested her leading to travel in ministry
1208 and recognize her call to travel among Friends as the Spirit leads, to join them in fellowship, worship
1209 and prayer.

1210 _____(Name)_____ is an experienced and grounded Friend who has been an active member of the
1211 Society of Friends for many years. She has faithfully served on and been clerk of various committees
1212 within our own Monthly Meeting as well as serving as a member of New England Yearly Meeting
1213 Ministry & Counsel where her particular work focused on spiritual nurture and eldering.

1214 Through her call, she has traveled under a minute to Ohio Yearly Meeting Conservative to better
1215 understand the office of elder in a yearly meeting that recognizes such gifts. Her own gift of eldering
1216 has assisted our meeting during times of conflict and provided spiritual nurture to individuals.

1217 We commit Friend _____(Name)_____ to your prayerful care and nurture during her time among you.

1218 Approved by _____ Monthly Meeting, (date)

1219 _____ (Signature) _____, clerk

1221 (For travel within the quarter)

1222 Endorsed by _____ Quarterly Meeting, (date)

1223 _____ (Signature) _____, clerk

1225 (For travel outside NEYM)

1226 Endorsed by Permanent Board of New England Yearly Meeting, (date)

1227 (Signature) , clerk

1229 We have been blessed by the presence of ____ (Name) ____ among us. Her message was very
1230 moving and inspiring for us.

1231 (Signature) , clerk

1232 _____ Monthly Meeting (date)

1234 A minute of denominational endorsement is given to an individual seeking professional
1235 accreditation for a specific calling; for example, to a Friend who wishes to serve as a hospital
1236 chaplain or a pastoral counselor. It affirms the individual's membership in the Religious Society
1237 of Friends and that the meeting will assume the necessary supervision for the process.

Since recognition of ministry in NEYM has historically occurred at the quarterly meeting level, not at the yearly meeting level, quarterly meeting endorsement is accepted as “denominational endorsement” by the American Association of Pastoral Counselors.

1. The Friend seeking endorsement should approach the meeting clerk or Ministry & Counsel, who will appoint a clearness committee to meet with the Friend to discern the appropriateness of the endorsement and the meeting’s readiness to give such endorsement.
2. The clearness committee may report back to Ministry & Counsel or directly to the meeting for business, according to the practice of the monthly meeting.
3. The minute of denominational endorsement must be approved by both the monthly meeting and the quarterly meeting.
4. A committee is often appointed to support the Friend’s work and to provide any required reports.
5. The minute of denominational endorsement is in effect for as long as needed. It is not endorsed by the receiving body or returned to the monthly meeting.
6. The minute of endorsement includes:
 - The name of the Friend receiving endorsement
 - A statement that the Friend is a member in good standing
 - An expression of the meeting’s endorsement of the specific ministry
 - The date and signature of the monthly meeting clerk
 - The date and signature of the quarterly meeting clerk

Sample minute of endorsement

[Meeting letterhead and date]

Minute of Endorsement for ____ (Name) ____

____ (Name) ____ is a member in good standing of ____ Monthly Meeting. We endorse his ministry as a pastoral counselor and have approved a committee which will meet with him once a year and be available as otherwise needed. This committee will provide accountability for his ministry by seeking clarity with ____ (Name) ____ about the nature and form this ministry takes. It will also assure an ongoing connection with his faith community.

Signed at the direction of ____ Monthly Meeting, (date)

____ (Signature) ____, clerk

Further endorsed by ____ Quarterly Meeting, (date)

____ (Signature) ____, clerk

(In this case the monthly meeting is appointing a committee for the Friend receiving endorsement in order to fulfill the requirements of the American Association of Pastoral Counselors.)

Minute of Religious Service

When ministries are of extended duration and well known to the meeting, Ministry & Counsel may write a minute of religious service for the Friend to express corporate support of the Friend and the ministry. These minutes are brief, usually a page or less. They often recognize a Friend with a specific social justice or service leading, but can also be written to recognize Friends whose work is broader in scope. Minutes of Religious Service may be written by meetings that wish to recognize and affirm the work of the Spirit in the lives of their members, including those meetings which do not choose to participate in the practice of recording ministers.

1. Monthly meeting Ministry & Counsel discerns that a member has a sustained a valuable ministry over time and reports this to the monthly meeting. If the monthly meeting approves, Ministry & Counsel will prepare a minute, approved by the monthly meeting, for consideration by the quarterly meeting Ministry & Counsel.
2. Quarterly meeting Ministry & Counsel will appoint a committee to appraise the ministry of the individual under consideration and report at a subsequent session of the quarterly meeting Ministry & Counsel. If the quarterly meeting Ministry & Counsel approves the minute of religious service, it is reported to the Yearly Meeting.
3. When the quarterly meeting has acted favorably on the matter, the minute is thereby completed, and the clerk will furnish a copy to the monthly meeting of which the individual is a member.
4. The action should also be reported to the Yearly Meeting's Ministry & Counsel, together with a copy of the minute.

Sample Minute of Religious Service

[Meeting letterhead and date]

Minute of Religious Service for the Ministry of ____ (Name) ____

____ Friends Meeting recognizes that our member, ____ (Name) ____ has been called by the Spirit into a ministry of _____. He is led to _____. His ministry includes _____. Grounded in his own experience of relationship with God, his ministry is an expression of _____.

We have received the blessing of his ministry among us. We support his call to minister to others, with prayer and by providing a Care & Accountability Committee. ____ (Name) ____ and his committee will report to Ministry & Counsel annually and to the meeting for business at appointed times. At the end of the third year, the meeting will revisit its commitment to support this ministry.

We commend ____ (Name) ____ to all, in the hope that he will be warmly received wherever he serves.

Approved by _____ Monthly Meeting on (date)

Approved by _____ Quarterly Meeting on (date)

Renewed on (date)

____ (Signature) _____, clerk

Minute for a Released Friend

A minute of release recognizes that a Friend has a significant leading that the meeting feels called to support in specific ways that release the Friend from various other encumbrances in their life, for example relief from the need to earn a full-time income.

1. A Friend, feeling a clear call to act that requires more than they can sustain individually, sends a request for release to Ministry & Counsel or the meeting clerk. An appointed clearness committee will address such questions as:
 - Is the calling genuine and clear?
 - Does the meeting, as a body, feel clear that this Friend needs to be released?
 - Is the person equipped to carry out the calling?
 - In what ways is the meeting willing and able to support this calling? (This may include financial or other material support.)
2. Upon recommendation of the clearness committee, Ministry & Counsel or another appropriate committee proposes a minute to the monthly meeting explaining the ministry and detailing the responsibilities the meeting is asked to commit to, including:
 - Appointment of a committee of two or three persons to provide spiritual and practical support for the Friend, to meet with them during the life of the work
 - Mechanisms for the solicitation, management and disbursement of any financial support
 - Maintenance of an informed interest in the progress of the work through periodic reports to the committee on Ministry and Counsel
 - Prayerful consideration of other forms of support as need may arise
3. If Friends are clear to release this ministry, a minute of release is approved by the monthly meeting. The minute of release includes:
 - A description of the leading and work for which the Friend is released
 - The time period and review/renewal process for the minute
 - What specific resources the meeting will provide, including a committee of care & accountability and possible financial support
4. If the minute of release is approved, the released Friend may carry the minute with them to use in any way which supports that call. It needs no further endorsement.
5. The Care & Accountability committee for the released Friend makes regular reports to Ministry & Counsel which shares parts, or all, of the report to with meeting for business.

Sample minute of release

[Meeting letterhead and date]

____ (Name) ____ (they/their) is an active member of ____ Monthly Meeting. They have shared with us their calling to work with, and on behalf of, those who are victims and survivors of child abuse. Their deep commitment has led them to work with others throughout the state and country to begin building a supportive network for the compelling needs of those victims of childhood trauma, and to

work to establish children's rights. This work addresses both the very personal needs for caring and healing and the larger need for social and political change.

Having tested ____ (Name)'s ____ concern, we are convinced this work is a leading and we release them for this service.

This minute of release will be reviewed in three years.

____ (Signature)____, clerk (date)

Recording Gifts in Ministry

A minute recording gifts in the ministry has traditionally been used to acknowledge recognition of sustained gifts in vocal ministry as exhibited in a particular Friend, and of the Society's trust in the Friend to interpret the Religious Society of Friends to the wider community. Not all quarterly meetings in New England continue the practice of recording.

1. Monthly meeting Ministry & Counsel discerns that a member has a sustained gift in vocal ministry and reports this to the monthly meeting. If the monthly meeting approves, Ministry & Counsel will prepare a minute for consideration by the quarterly meeting Ministry & Counsel.
2. Quarterly meeting Ministry & Counsel will appoint a committee to appraise the general fitness of the individual under consideration and report at a subsequent session of the quarterly meeting Ministry & Counsel. If the quarterly meeting Ministry & Counsel approves the recording, it is reported to the Yearly Meeting.
3. When the quarterly meeting has acted favorably on the matter, the recording is thereby completed, and the clerk will furnish a copy to the monthly meeting of which the individual is a member.
4. The action should also be reported to the Yearly Meeting's Ministry & Counsel, together with a copy of the minute.
5. The minute remains in effect while the ministry has life.

Rescinding Recording of a Gift

Gifts of the spirit often lie quiescent for a time, only to emerge again with full vigor. However, if the minister or the meeting finds that the gift of ministry appears to have been withdrawn, or if Friends no longer feel comfortable being represented to the world by that individual, the community may consider rescinding the recording. When laboring over the possibility that the gift is no longer present, it is important to allow the individual, as much as possible, to faithfully discern the status of the gift and request that Ministry & Counsel lay down the recording if that is what is to be done. In the absence of a request from the Friend, the proposal to rescind originates either in the Ministry & Counsel of the quarterly meeting or in the Ministry & Counsel of the monthly meeting where the Friend is a member. In every case final action should rest with the quarterly meeting. The individual concerned, and the monthly meeting to which the Friend belongs, should be notified before final action is taken.

1. A committee from the quarter's Ministry and Counsel is appointed to meet with the individual to discern, with that Friend, the life of the ministry, or to explain why they are no longer considered an appropriate representative of the Religious Society of Friends.
2. When laboring over the possibility that the gift is no longer present, it is important to allow the individual, as much as possible, to faithfully discern the status of the gift. In this light, it is preferable to have the Friend who carries the gift request the laying down of the recording, rather than having the request for rescinding be brought by the committee alone.
3. The committee reports back to the quarterly meeting Ministry & Counsel, which then discerns the committee's recommendation, and brings it to the quarterly meeting.
4. The monthly meeting and the Friend with the recorded gift should be notified prior to final action, and Ministry & Counsel of the yearly meeting should be notified of the decision to rescind.
5. The final action rests with the quarterly meeting.

5L. The Search for a Pastor

The pastoral search committee reviews applications from candidates and recommends to Ministry & Counsel those they feel are appropriate to invite for an interview. As well as a time for questions, the candidate is also asked to bring a message for worship and possibly to arrange for other program elements for the worship such as prayer, music, readings, and a children's message. In this way the whole meeting has a chance to experience the candidate's ministry, talk with them, and give feedback to the pastoral search committee. The committee reports their discernment to Ministry & Counsel who then brings a recommendation to the meeting for business. A contract is drawn up and is brought to the meeting for business for approval.