

**Draft Text on Pastoral Care  
Presented at NEYM Annual Sessions, 2018**

*“Knowing one another in that which is eternal” is the ground and basis for walking with each other everyday and learning to care for each other.*

**Foundations of Pastoral Care**

1) Pastoral care is a reflection of the loving concern for the spiritual and physical condition of Friends within a meeting. Thoughtful attention, careful listening, and prayer are at its heart. The impulse to offer such care grows out of the increased awareness, sensitivity and love for one another that flows out of shared worship and a sense of unity in the Spirit. It is an extension of the direct Divine care offered to each one of us. It happens most effectively in a meeting where members know and trust one another. As a religious community, we share the responsibility to be attentive to the needs and conditions of the members and attenders in our meeting.

2) Times of fellowship and shared work allow personal ties to form which help open the way for Friends to both ask for and to receive care from one another. We come to know each other as we worship together, do business, and work together on meeting committees. When we gather less formally in discussion and study groups, to share meals and to work on social service projects, the bonds of the community may grow into personal friendships. It is important for meetings to encourage such opportunities for fellowship across generations and between new and long time members and attenders. When our meeting community is gathered in fellowship and in the Spirit, we are more prepared to offer, or ask for, support when the need arises in our spiritual and personal lives.

3) There are times when Friends need more than the usual support that fellowship and friendship provide. In times of illness or grief, of transition or personal struggle, an individual, couple or family may reach out for more focused support from the meeting community. True care requires an open heart and a humble willingness to be of service. It is a journey taken together, each person open to leadings of the Spirit. The individual asking for help can then receive support without feeling diminished. When a meeting discerns that professional resources are needed, the meeting can support the individual in seeking them.

4) Whatever the size of the meeting and whatever form its structure takes, pastoral care is a vital part of a healthy meeting.

**Practices Supporting Pastoral Care**

5) Pastoral Care can take as many forms as there are needs, and these needs may change over time. Sometimes it may be as simple as a meal delivered or a walkway shoveled, and at other times it may mean ongoing prayer and meetings for clearness or support.

*Spiritual Support*

6) At times of crisis, prayer and spiritual companionship are especially important. While the meeting may also provide practical assistance, we have a particular responsibility to offer each other spiritual support. Listening carefully and patiently, without judgment, can be of immense help.

41 Worshipping and praying together can help bring reassurance and grounding. Knowing that others  
42 are offering prayers at other times and places can provide comfort, strength and consolation.

43 *Practical Care*

44 7) Friends extend practical care to one another to the extent they are able. In addition to  
45 helping an individual, such care may ease stress for the person's family members. Help with  
46 shopping, meals and transportation are all examples of practical care that can support an individual,  
47 or a family, at a difficult time.

48  
49 *Limits To What Friends Can Offer*

50 8) At times it may become clear that professionally-trained help is needed to responsibly  
51 address practical or counseling needs. It is of the utmost importance for a meeting or individuals  
52 doing pastoral care to discern when this is the case. The often fractured quality of our society means  
53 that people may not have sufficient support networks when they are in crisis. Meetings today are  
54 seeing people in need of help that the meeting cannot provide. Even when professional help is  
55 needed, Friends may still, as a meeting, offer support through prayer, practical assistance, advocacy,  
56 and coordination of services.

57  
58 *Care Within The Meeting Community*

59 9) Pastoral care is concerned with people of all ages and social conditions within the meeting. A  
60 healthy religious community will explore ways to keep all members engaged with the meeting's life.

61  
62 10) Pastoral care includes finding ways to keep connections with Friends who are unable to  
63 attend worship or social events for reasons that might include age, illness or personal crises. It may  
64 be appropriate to offer regular times of worship or discussion groups in their homes or other  
65 activities that help them stay engaged with the meeting. Remember that these Friends may also have  
66 practical needs.

67 11) There are Friends whose life circumstances prevent them from engaging as fully as they  
68 would wish in the life of the meeting. It is part of the pastoral care of the meeting to address as  
69 many of these impediments as possible. Solutions may range from fresh batteries in hearing  
70 assistance devices, to the creation of a mid-week meeting for worship, or childcare during committee  
71 meetings.

72 12) Sometimes it is unclear why a person is not attending meeting. When it is noticed that a  
73 Friend has been absent for some time, an individual may enquire if all is well. It may be that the  
74 Friend has found that the meeting is not the right spiritual home for them and their spiritual search  
75 has taken them elsewhere. Alternatively, if it becomes clear that a Friend is absent because of  
76 disaffection with the meeting, Ministry and Counsel may offer an in-person visit. Friends are called  
77 to overcome a hesitation born of uncertainty about how they will be received, or from a sense of  
78 inadequacy, or fear of being with a person who is angry or in crisis.

79 13) Friends also need to be alert to the subtle societal differences that can create a sense of  
80 exclusion for an individual in the community. Members and attenders come from a variety of social,  
81 economic, and ethnic backgrounds. Meetings where many members are affluent, for example, may  
82 not feel welcoming to those who struggle financially. People of color may find meetings ignorant of  
83 or unsympathetic to their experience. Those who feel there is disapproval of their choice of spiritual  
84 language may feel their spiritual insights are disregarded or unwelcome. It is important for meetings

85 to actively examine their assumptions, expectations, and practices in order to ensure all who are  
86 committed to the search for Truth are welcome. It is difficult to be aware of our blind spots, but if  
87 our Society is to be genuinely inclusive it is essential that we do this work together. In some cases,  
88 the meeting itself may need pastoral care.

89 14) There may be times when Ministry and Counsel calls on the meeting to recognize ongoing  
90 revelation of Truth and places where falsity and discord persist in ourselves as individuals. This  
91 occurred in the past, for example, when meetings examined the participation of their members in  
92 the slave trade and in the ownership of enslaved peoples. Friends continue to be challenged in  
93 addressing racism in our midst. Structural inequalities of privilege and other deep concerns will  
94 continue to challenge the Society and provide opportunities for an evolving understanding of Truth.

95 *Tools for Maintaining Contact*

96 15) Modern technology has increased the variety of ways we can keep in touch – phone, email,  
97 social media, list serves, etc. These may be useful tools, especially for keeping in touch with  
98 members who live at a distance. Some people who need counsel either cannot, or would prefer not,  
99 to meet in person. Long distance communication may be very welcome and helpful; however,  
100 Friends should be aware of the possibilities of misunderstandings and breaches of confidentiality  
101 when electronic communication is used. In addition, it should be remembered that the ease of more  
102 indirect, though more immediate communication, may also pose great risk if it is too frequently used  
103 in place of face-to-face meetings with one another.

104 **Structures Supporting Pastoral Care of Individuals**

106 16) Meetings vary in the ways they structure the work of pastoral care and this may depend on  
107 their size. Large meetings may have a Ministry and Counsel Committee with a Pastoral Care  
108 Committee under its charge. Small meetings may have a Ministry and Counsel Committee that  
109 includes pastoral care as part of its charge. In any case, the committee seeks to identify Friends who  
110 are particularly gifted in this area. Some New England meetings employ a pastor, part of whose  
111 work is to share in the pastoral care of the meeting. It is helpful for Ministry and Counsel to  
112 periodically remind the meeting whom to contact when pastoral care concerns arise. Every type of  
113 meeting has structures that assist in delivering pastoral care: clearness committees, support  
114 committees, and practical care committees, as needed.

115 *Clearness Committees for Personal Discernment*

116 17) A Friend facing a major decision or discerning a leading may find it helpful to ask for a  
117 clearness committee. The Friend may request a committee, or a member of the meeting may  
118 propose this opportunity. Once it is requested, Ministry and Counsel, in consultation with the  
119 individual, appoints the committee. The intention of the committee is to help draw out Divine  
120 guidance. The committee may need to meet only once or may need to meet several times with the  
121 individual. Confidentiality is maintained.

122 *Support Committees*

123 18) One type of support committee is set up in a similar way to the clearness committee process  
124 described above. Its purpose is to help a Friend who is going through a crisis or a life  
125 transition. Support includes holding the Friend in prayer, listening, responding tenderly, providing  
126 encouragement, and discerning whether practical or professional care is needed.

128

129 19) Friends also form a support committee for a meeting member who has a defined ministry or  
130 position within the meeting, such as clerk. Similarly, support committees are formed for Friends  
131 whose ministry takes them beyond the meeting. Such a committee meets regularly with the  
132 individual to review how things are going, to listen to concerns, to pray with them, and to help them  
133 gain clarity on how to proceed. The committee seeks ways to help the Friend be faithful to their  
134 calling. It also serves as an intermediary between the individual and the meeting, letting the meeting  
135 know about and helping it understand the work the Friend is doing. It encourages the meeting to  
136 hold the ministry of this Friend in prayer.

137 20) In the case of a paid staff position or a released Friend, care should be taken that the support  
138 committee for this ministry is separate from the oversight of the Friend's job or ministry. See the  
139 discussion of paid staff at \_\_\_\_\_ or released Friends at \_\_\_\_\_.

140 *Practical Care Committees*

141 21) At times Friends need practical assistance in their daily lives as they deal with illness, frailty,  
142 bereavement, or other challenges. Care committees are formed, as the meeting is able, to assist such  
143 Friends with things like meals for a period of time, transportation, and childcare. This may often be  
144 done in conjunction with the Friend's family members and friends from outside the meeting. It is  
145 important for all involved to carefully discern to what extent it is wise for them to be involved, and  
146 to balance loving generosity with self-care.

147  
148 *Pastoral Care Of Children And Young People*

149 22) Befriending the children and youth of our meeting is something each person can do to build  
150 up the young person's sense of being cherished and of belonging to the community. Their needs  
151 and concerns may be heard as older Friends take the time to pay attention to their words and  
152 actions. There can be rich sharing and learning between the generations when adults are willing to  
153 approach such conversations in a vulnerable and honest way. Children and young people want to  
154 have their spiritual journeys taken seriously, they want to be heard and asked challenging questions,  
155 and in turn, they want adults to be open with them about their own journeys and questions.

156 23) Monthly meetings may also encourage families to involve their children and youth in  
157 programs beyond the meeting. During the school year, the yearly meeting offers weekend retreats  
158 for a variety of age groups and some quarterly meetings host family retreats. There are programs for  
159 all age groups during yearly meeting sessions. The yearly meeting camp, Friends Camp in China,  
160 Maine, offers a series of programs during the summer.

161 24) Pastoral care offered by the meeting is usually within the context of the family and with  
162 parental consultation. At a certain point, however, children and young people may need confidential  
163 care separate from their parents or families. Families experiencing divorce, substance abuse, illness,  
164 or death, for example, may be overwhelmed and not equipped to provide the support a child needs.  
165 Young people struggling with issues around relationships, sexuality, gender identity, or peer  
166 pressure, to name a few, may feel more comfortable exploring their thoughts and concerns with a  
167 trusted adult member of the meeting who is outside of their family. When families request the help  
168 of the meeting to provide pastoral care for their children it is critical to make boundaries and  
169 expectations clear and explicit. When a child requests care on their own, they may request that their  
170 concerns not be shared with their family. It is critical in these instances also that boundaries and

171 expectations be clear and explicit. When a child requests care, and does not wish their family to  
172 know about the request, the individual or meeting must proceed with caution.

173  
174 25) All adults providing pastoral care to children, either formally or informally, must be aware of  
175 circumstances where confidentiality cannot be maintained, for example situations of abuse or self-  
176 harm. Familiarity with mandatory reporting laws is essential. Safety of the child should always be the  
177 first concern. Those providing pastoral care, especially those working as individuals, should take  
178 great care never to put themselves in a position where the safety of the child could be called into  
179 question. The Yearly Meeting has a Child Safety Policy that should be carefully read and understood.  
180 Each state has differing regulations regarding the responsibility of churches with respect to child  
181 safety. Monthly meetings should be aware of the regulations in their own state. The Yearly Meeting  
182 also has other support materials that may be useful to monthly meetings and to others doing work in  
183 the wider Friend's community.

184  
185 26) The same structures used to support adults may be valuable in support of children. Clearness  
186 committees, support committees, visitation, and practical care can be effective in honoring and  
187 supporting young people as they face the spiritual challenges of their lives. As in pastoral care for  
188 adults, however, the meeting must also take care to recognize when a child's needs are beyond the  
189 meeting's ability to meet.

190  
191 *See Appendix 8B for further information on structures and procedures to support pastoral care of individuals*  
192

### 193 **Pastoral Care of the Meeting**

#### 194 *Balance of Individual and Community Needs*

195 27) Within a meeting the needs and desires of individuals are held in balance with the needs and  
196 integrity of the whole. It is a work of love that the meeting insure that no individual's needs,  
197 behaviors, or assertiveness dominates the meeting community, while still providing openings for  
198 individual insights and community growth. Sometimes it is the individual and sometimes it is the  
199 meeting that needs to move to a new understanding.

#### 200 *Dealing With Conflict*

201 28) It is important for the health of the meeting that it be sensitive to conflict and move to  
202 resolve it without delay, if possible. Addressing conflicts is an opportunity for growth. When there  
203 is an interpersonal conflict and the individuals have not been able to resolve the difficulty privately, a  
204 Friend, or small group of Friends facilitates listening such that each person in the conflict is  
205 supported in hearing the concerns of the other. It is essential that all individuals involved in the  
206 conflict, or in its resolution, be willing to engage in the process and be open to finding unity in the  
207 Spirit. The same applies to groups within the meeting that are at odds with one another. If a conflict  
208 is widely known within the meeting community, it is important for Ministry and Counsel to make a  
209 broad statement that the problem is being addressed with love, and to respect confidentiality in  
210 terms of names and problem specifics. The process of dealing with conflict, whether resolved or  
211 not, may leave meetings themselves in need of pastoral care.

212  
213  
214 29) Meetings are often reluctant to admit troubling internal differences and to ask for pastoral  
215 care for themselves from beyond the local meeting. Friends are called to care for one another and to

216 offer loving support to a meeting just as they would to an individual experiencing  
217 difficulties. Support and prayerful discernment can be sought from quarterly or yearly meeting  
218 ministry and counsel, remembering that some conflicts require a long, slow healing process.

219 *Affirmations and Trust*

220 30) Care of the meeting also takes the form of building up a spirit of faith and confidence. By  
221 reminding the meeting of those areas where unity and strength have been evident, we affirm where  
222 the meeting has been faithful in the past in following the Spirit's leadings. In times of difficulty,  
223 reminding Friends of how God has been present in facing the challenges of the past can restore a  
224 sense of unity.

225

226 *A Shared Responsibility*

227 31) While meetings may have specific people overseeing pastoral care - Ministry and Counsel, a  
228 pastoral care committee, a pastor – it is not intended that they do it all. Rather, each Friend is  
229 encouraged to be alert to the spiritual, emotional, practical, and physical needs of others and of the  
230 wellbeing of the community as a whole.

231

232 **Extracts**

233 1. *The direct pastoral care of God for each individual is expressed in the shepherd imagery of Psalm 23*

234 The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.

235 He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters.

236 He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

237 Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art  
238 with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.

239 Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head  
240 with oil; my cup runneth over.

241 Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the  
242 house of the LORD forever.

243

*King James Version*

244

245

246 2. The eternal God is thy dwelling place, And underneath are the everlasting arms.

247

*Deuteronomy 33:27, American Standard Version*

248

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

252

*Isaac Penington, 1667*

253

254 4. *A message about pastoral care addressed to the young Christian churches:*

255 He comes alongside us when we go through hard times, and before you know it, he brings us

256 alongside someone else who is going through hard times so that we can be there for that person just  
257 as God was there for us.

258

*2 Corinthians 1:4 (The Message)*

259

260 5. “When I meet with a person, a couple or a family, in need or pain, I consider this meeting a  
261 special form of meeting for worship; a meeting where we gather to focus on the needs of the person  
262 or family and seek to discern the healing and guiding movement of the Spirit. Such a meeting is  
263 sacred. It is a place of meeting – of encounter – with ourselves, with each other, and with God. It  
264 is a place where we may be surprised by God, where we may be confronted by painful realities,  
265 where we may find a deep sense of relational connection and where we may discover healing, new  
266 life and empowerment....

267 In this sense, we can say that pastoral care is sacramental. Pastoral care affirms the presence and  
268 power of the sacred in the everyday realities of our lives and struggles, and it affirms our capacity to  
269 experience that power and presence. Proclaiming the presence of a life-giving, healing power at the  
270 heart of life, it calls all present into the experience of the transforming power at the heart of our  
271 lives.

272 *Maureen Graham Pg. 6-7 “Out of the Silence” Quaker Perspective on Pastoral Care and Counseling*  
273 *edited by J. Bill Ratliff. Pendle Hill Publications*  
274

275 6. The healing journey is not simple it is not easy. There is a deep restlessness to be totally  
276 well, totally healed. Yet I realize having gone through a threatening illness that what held me  
277 together was not my own strength, but the strength of a community that held me up in prayer and  
278 action. It was all-important. I needed that prayer. I felt it in core places physical and spiritual. At one  
279 point in Intensive Care I was in so much pain and unable to communicate...My world was filled with  
280 the endlessness of hospital noise. And I was trying to shut it all out, I was trying to shut down. It  
281 was just a draining experience.

282 Then out of the darkness I heard two voices. Judy and Dave were in the room by my bed talking to  
283 me, holding me in the Mist of unity. And I had nothing to say.... Well, I had a lot to say but I was  
284 having a Zacharias experience—unable to speak, but excited because in that moment I was  
285 understanding a lot. My frustration deepened, but only for a moment. It became not important that  
286 I could not communicate, that my words were useless. I had an interior understanding and while I  
287 was frustrated in my silence, it was in the depth of a deepening understanding that I grew to  
288 understand the beauty of our Quaker silence. I gave myself up to it and I was nourished —by Judy  
289 and Dave that day and by many other Friends on what seemed like many endless days. I let that  
290 blanket of goodness cover me.

291 *There come times when the Presence steals upon us, all unexpected and not the product of agonized effort, and*  
292 *we live in a new dimension of life. (Thomas R. Kelly [A Testament of Devotion, Harper 1941, pp. 93-*  
293 *94])*

294 We are called as Friends to this “new dimension” as we deal with War, Immigration, Urban  
295 Violence, Gender Equality, Racism, Poverty, Prisons, Tax Resistance. We are challenged to live a  
296 unique silence, an informed silence, a silence of hope. The silence of our meeting worship, must  
297 invade our lives on all other days. You and I must savor this reality. We must touch the “Deep” of  
298 Silence.

299 *Greg Williams, 2007*  
300

301 7. “All of us deeply yearn to be known, to be “heard into speech,” as Parker Palmer says. Each of us  
302 needs to be loved unconditionally, to be given space to grow, to be forgiven, to be nudged gently  
303 open, and to join in some sort of communion in awe and wonder. I believe this is what makes  
304 spiritual community.”

**draft 2018, now partly superseded by the draft chapter on M&C**

305 *Gretchen Baker Smith IMYM Keynote Address published in Western Friend, September/October 2012 as “Living*  
306 *Bravely in Sacred Time” Nurturing a multigenerational spiritual community of Friends*  
307

308 8. When (*young people are*) asked what they would find helpful, their advice to adults is simple “Treat  
309 us like you’d like to be treated. Treat us with respect,” says Ben “and don’t just make chit-chat. I’ve  
310 got views on just about any issue, and I like people who actually can talk about things.” Youth want  
311 to have significant relationships with meeting adults...

312 Patti encourages adults to move beyond their stereotypes about young people. “Some people seem  
313 not to get beyond the fact that I’m only eleven. Then there are people who just think of me as ‘my  
314 dad’s daughter’...I feel like they don’t really try to get to know *me*...” Patti continues “I think one  
315 reason why adults don’t try to get to know the kids in the meeting that well is because they’re scared  
316 of us. Don’t ask me why. And when they get scared it intimidates the kids and also makes the kids a  
317 little shyer.”

318 *Philadelphia Yearly Meeting Pastoral Care Newsletter March 1995, “Nurturing Families and Children in*  
319 *Meeting” by Marty Smith and Carolyn Terrell*  
320

321 9. Our meeting had a member who had a very definite view of how things should be, and who was  
322 frequently critical of other members and of elements of worship and meeting life. As pastor I  
323 frequently heard the distress of those who felt attacked by her and was myself disturbed by it. I  
324 decided to sit with her and listen to all her complaints, responding only by briefly reflecting them  
325 back to her. Most of the time I listened in silence. After about 45 minutes of this deep listening  
326 what I heard was the sub-text “I really care about this meeting” and I was able to express this to her  
327 with gratitude. Toward the end of this listening session she started to reflect on her own behavior,  
328 to feel that she might try to change her way of dealing with things that disturbed her, and to be open  
329 to the possibility that others may care as much as she did but show it in different ways. In the  
330 months that followed, there were fewer incidents of the disruptive behavior and when they did  
331 happen, I had a better rapport with the woman to address them.

332 *Maggie Edmondson, personal communication*

333 10. People who exhibit behavior which we describe as “difficult” make us uncomfortable, and it is a  
334 very normal human response to want a lessening of discomfort... Our discomfort is useful in letting  
335 us know that something is wrong, something needs attention – but what?

336 Is the person identified bringing a message that we need to hear but don’t want to listen to?

337 Is it what the person is saying which is troubling to us, or is it the manner in which it is being  
338 said?

339 Is there a message (in words or actions), or is the behavior irrational and not rooted in the reality  
340 in which most of us are grounded?

341 Individually and collectively, how might we be causing, or at the very least, contributing to the  
342 behavior we find unacceptable?

343 Are we giving a consistent message to the person whose behavior is troubling that we find the  
344 behavior unacceptable, or do some of us directly or indirectly affirm the behavior?

345 These questions and others that you could add to the list, can help us to begin the process of  
346 hopefully finding common ground which can serve as a meeting place with the person whose  
347 behavior is troubling us...

348 And yes, we need to recognize how we take advantage of qualities which make a person well-  
349 suited to a committee assignment, such as being meticulous in the care of property, and then



350 become impatient with them when they carry that to an extreme. I am not saying that we cause  
351 difficult behavior, but I am clear that there are ways in which we inadvertently intensify it.

352 *Arlene Kelly, "Dealing with Difficult Situations" October 2004 Philadelphia Yearly Meeting Pastoral Care*  
353 *Newsletter*

354  
355 11. Seek to know one another in the things which are eternal, bear the burden of each other's  
356 failings and pray for one another. As we enter with tender sympathy into the joys and sorrows of  
357 each other's lives, ready to give help and to receive it, our meeting can be a channel for God's love  
358 and forgiveness.

359 *Britain Yearly Meeting, Quaker Faith and Practice, section 1.02, No. 18*

360  
361

### 362 **Advices for the Individual**

363 1. Accompany one another as spiritual companions. Encourage one another. Be willing to speak up  
364 in love when you see another go astray, and to humbly receive loving admonition when your own  
365 behavior is in question.

366 2. Pray for one another. Listen carefully and with openness. Practice mindfulness of one another's  
367 joys, concerns, burdens, infirmities, and sorrows. Cultivate an inward resolve to respond in  
368 compassionate, helpful and practical ways.

369 3. When offering spoken prayer in the presence of someone in need, trust that the Spirit will provide  
370 the words. Remember that the resources of the Spirit are vast and you may be the vehicle the Spirit  
371 has chosen to bring comfort and healing.

372 4. Be aware of the spiritual journey of the children and youth of the meeting. Remember, experience  
373 of the Spirit has no age barriers. Consider how we give and receive support across generations.

374 5. Intervisitation has traditionally been important to maintaining loving connections. Do not discard  
375 meaningful traditions simply because new technologies may be more convenient. Intangible benefits  
376 accrue when we gather face-to-face in the Spirit.

377 6. Give freely of your time and your attentive presence to the extent that the duties and callings of  
378 your own life allow.

379 7. Keep in mind the needs and well-being of the whole meeting community and balance this with  
380 the needs of individuals, including yourself.

381

### 382 **Queries for Individuals**

383 1. How do you stay in fellowship with Friends you find difficult?

384 2. How do you interact with the youth of your meeting?

385 3. Where do you need to practice forgiveness or at least more spiritual generosity?

386 4. What stops you from offering help?

387 5. How do you discern what your work is to do?

388 6. Are you attentive to others in the “small things” so that you are prepared to be of service when  
389 called for larger pastoral care work?

390 7. Do you cultivate the humility necessary for the time when you will need to ask for and receive  
391 pastoral care yourself?

392

393 **APPENDIX 8: PASTORAL CARE AND CLEARNESS COMMITTEES FOR PERSONAL**  
394 **DISCERNMENT**

395

396 **8A. Advices and Queries for Pastoral Care Committees**

397

398 **Advices**

399

400 1. As a meeting, we accept a degree of responsibility and concern for one another. We would not  
401 wish to turn aside from one another in times of need.

402

403 2. As members of pastoral care committees we wish to ensure that all members of our community  
404 are able to draw upon the meeting’s care and concern. Useful ways to give support will necessarily  
405 vary from one situation to another. As we offer help we strive to be sensitive to one another’s  
406 spiritual, emotional, and material condition, and to the need of each of us to maintain our personal  
407 dignity and protect our privacy.

408

409 3. Pastoral care committees should be careful not to act beyond their competence or beyond the  
410 limits of their proper responsibility.

411

412 4. Our feelings and motivations necessarily color our decisions and discussions about individuals.  
413 We need to be especially aware of our feelings about a person and that these may overcome our  
414 ability to discern God’s will. We should be prayerful in maintaining this awareness and, as necessary,  
415 remaining silent in our meetings.

416

417 **Queries**

418

419 1. Do we reach out to ensure that contact is maintained with all of our Meeting community? Do we  
420 make clear that we are available to offer mutual support—spiritual, emotional, and material? Are all  
421 encouraged to seek and accept the support of the Meeting?

422

423 2. Do we take care that each member of our community is held in sensitive awareness, with respect  
424 for personal dignity and privacy? Are we tender of one another’s feelings? Do we maintain  
425 confidentiality, avoid gossip, and refrain from unnecessary and inappropriate exchange of  
426 information?

427

428 3. How do the often-invisible cultural norms of our Meetings keep some Friends at a distance?

429 4. As we offer pastoral care, do we each maintain awareness of our own needs and motivations and  
430 the effect these may have on our own care-giving? Are we careful to distinguish personal feelings

431 about individuals—positive or negative— from our charge to care for them? In striving to help  
432 others, do we seek the Spirit through prayer and silence?

433  
434 5. Are we sensitive to the limits of our capacities and the limits of our responsibilities? Are we  
435 prepared to express these limits and recommend professional resources?

436  
437 6. Do we remember to faithfully hold in prayer those to whom we offer care? Do we as members of  
438 pastoral care committees hold ourselves mutually accountable to the spirit of these queries?

439

## 440 **8B. Guidance for a Clearness Committee for Personal Discernment**

441

442 A clearness committee meets with a person who is unclear how to proceed in a keenly felt concern  
443 or dilemma, hoping that it can help them reach clarity. It assumes that each of us has an Inner  
444 Teacher who can guide us and that the answer sought can be found by the person seeking clearness.  
445 It also assumes that a group of caring friends can help draw out the Spirit's guidance from and for  
446 that person. The committee members' purpose is not to give advice or to "fix" the situation; their  
447 task is to listen, setting aside their own prejudices or judgments, to help clarify alternatives, to help  
448 communication if necessary, and to provide emotional support as an individual seeks to find truth  
449 and the right course of action. The clearness committee works best when everyone approaches it  
450 prayerfully, which does not exclude an element of playfulness.

451

### 452 **Organizing the clearness committee**

453

454 1. The person seeking clearness always initiates the request to form a committee, though a friend  
455 may ask, "Would a clearness committee be helpful?" The request is brought to Ministry and Council  
456 who invites the person to name people they feel may be helpful and Ministry and Council may  
457 suggest others. Ministry and Council then appoints the clearness committee.

458

459 2. In advance of the meeting, it is helpful for the person seeking clearness to describe the matter in  
460 writing, identifying it as precisely as possible and giving relevant background information. This  
461 should be made available to committee members.

462

### 463 **Conducting the clearness committee**

464 At the beginning of the meeting, a clerk and a recorder are appointed. The clerk opens and closes  
465 the meeting and keeps a sense of right order in between, making sure that agreed-on guidelines are  
466 followed and that everyone who wishes to speak may do so. Any member of the committee may  
467 intervene if necessary to ensure that guidelines are followed. The recorder writes down the questions  
468 asked and perhaps some of the responses and gives this record to the person seeking clearness after  
469 the meeting.

470

471 1. The clerk invites the committee to prepare for its work, reminds everyone of the guidelines to be  
472 followed and makes sure there is a common understanding of the degree of confidentiality about the  
473 meeting.

474

475 2. All settle into a period of centering silence.

476

- 477 3. When the person seeking clearness is ready, they begin with a brief summary of the question or  
478 concern.  
479
- 480 4. Members of the committee hold to a discipline of asking brief, probing question as led by the  
481 Spirit, resisting urges to present solutions or give advice. It is crucial that these questions be asked  
482 not for the sake of satisfying the questioner's curiosity, but for the sake of drawing out the person's  
483 clarity. The pace of questions should be kept deliberately gentle and relaxed to encourage reflection.  
484 Committee members should also trust their intuitions. Even if a question seems odd, if it feels  
485 insistent it should be asked.  
486
- 487 5. The person seeking clearness normally answers the questions in front of the group and the  
488 response generates more questions. It is always the person's absolute right not to answer. The more  
489 often a person can answer, the more they and the committee have to go on, but this should never be  
490 done at the expense of the person's privacy or need to protect vulnerable feelings. It is a good idea  
491 for the person seeking clearness to keep answers fairly brief so that time remains for more  
492 discernment.  
493
- 494 6. Do not be anxious if there are extended periods of silence. It does not mean that nothing is  
495 happening; in fact, the Spirit may be powerfully at work within the person seeking clearness and the  
496 committee members.  
497
- 498 7. Well before the end of the session, following at least half an hour of questions and answers, the  
499 clerk pauses to ask the person how they wish to proceed. This is an opportunity for the person to  
500 choose, if it feels appropriate, a mode of seeking clarity other than questions. The recorder  
501 continues to record during this time. Possibilities include:  
502 a. silence out of which anyone may speak  
503 b. silence out of which people share images as they concentrate on the person seeking clearness  
504 c. continued questions from the committee  
505 d. reflection on what has been said  
506 e. affirmation of the person's gifts  
507 f. questions to the committee from the person seeking clearness  
508
- 509 8. Before the session ends the person may wish to share any clarity which has come to them. They  
510 and the committee consider together whether another meeting is needed and, if so, schedule it at  
511 this time. It may be that the person will not need to meet with the committee again. Alternatively a  
512 support or oversight committee may be appointed to help the person remain clear and/or be  
513 accountable to their discernment. Members of the clearness committee are free to release themselves  
514 from further commitment, or to offer to serve on such committees.  
515  
516

### **8C. Queries for Those Asked to Serve on Clearness Committees**

- 517  
518  
519 1. Is this your work to do at this time?  
520

## **draft 2018, now partly superseded by the draft chapter on M&C**

521 2. Can you devote sufficient time and energy to this committee, knowing that it may take several  
522 meetings and many weeks or months to clarify the problem and provide support while the decision  
523 is made and carried out?  
524

525 3. Do you feel sufficiently at ease with the person seeking clearness and with the other members of  
526 the committee to work with them? Can you engage with them to provide an atmosphere in which  
527 divine guidance can be sought?  
528

529 4. If it is a decision to be made by more than one person, can you set aside your own prejudice or  
530 bias as you listen to each person involved?  
531

532 5. Are you willing to keep the committee discussions confidential and avoid gossiping or referring to  
533 them outside the committee unless those requesting the help of the committee are comfortable with  
534 a wider sharing? ?  
535

536 6. Can you keep an open heart and an open mind about the outcome?  
537

### **8D. Advices for Those Who Have Agreed to Serve on Clearness Committees**

539  
540 1. While the convener takes care of the practical details of setting up the meeting and keeps a sense  
541 of right order while it is in progress, remember that each member of the committee shares  
542 responsibility for maintaining a prayerful presence, asking for times of silence when needed, and  
543 asking questions as led by the Spirit. It is not an occasion to provide counseling but a spiritual  
544 exercise which aims to help the person or people requesting clearness to hear the Spirit's guidance  
545 for themselves. Don't offer solutions or advice but ask honest, probing questions to assist them in  
546 this process. Listen deeply to all that is said.  
547

548 2. If the meeting is for more than one person, try to give equal attention to each person present,  
549 whether adult or child.  
550

551 3. In the case of difficulties or joyful complexities, remember that people are capable of change and  
552 growth. Focus on the situation that is prompting the need for discernment.

Extract References

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556

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