

**INTERIM
FAITH AND PRACTICE
2014
(2015 EDITION)**



**NEW ENGLAND
YEARLY MEETING
OF FRIENDS**

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INTERIM FAITH AND PRACTICE

2014

Updated, with Study Guide, 2015

Table of Contents

1	INTRODUCTION
3	Section 1. THE CHAPTERS WITH PRELIMINARY APPROVAL
4	PREFACE
5	Chapter 1: <i>Illustrative Experiences of Friends</i>
46	Chapter 2: <i>Worship</i>
62	Chapter 3: <i>Corporate Discernment in Meetings for Business</i>
81	Chapter 9: <i>A Brief History of Friends in New England</i>
106	Chapter 10: <i>Revisions to This Faith and Practice</i>
107	Chapter 11: <i>General Advices and Queries</i>
122	Section 2. THE APPENDICES WORKING PAPER
180	Section 3.
182	A Peculiar People
188	Moving Forward to the Remaining Chapters: The Integration of Faith and Life
190	SOURCES AND REFERENCES
205	STUDY GUIDE

Introduction

Since 2002 our trust that God is guiding us in the work of Faith and Practice revision has been grounded in a three-fold path of faith: faith in our Guide, faith in continuing revelation, and faith that we can be guided together. We have been clear since our beginnings that we wanted not just to revise the 1985 book, but to engage with the Yearly Meeting in re-visioning it by identifying where the Life is among us, and articulating and nurturing it. We intended our work to be a stimulus to discussion and prayerful discernment within the meetings, which would in turn inform our work. It has done both, and we are grateful for the insights of many meetings and individuals. We also affirm that these explorations are as valuable, or more so, than the final book.

During the 2013 NEYM Sessions we heard that Friends felt it would be useful to have the work done so far compiled into a book that could be held in the hand and set on a bedside table. At the same time the Publications and Communications Committee clerk offered to explore supporting our work. We are grateful for the work of many on that committee and beyond who worked to bring this project to fruition.

This *Interim Faith and Practice* is being made available at this time so that the Yearly Meeting may live with it, use it and continue to be fellow workers with us as we proceed to the remaining chapters on how our faith is lived out in our personal lives, in our meetings, and in the wider world. If the work were only that of the people on the Faith and Practice Revision Committee it would be incomplete. We need to be held closely by the body of the Yearly Meeting and to feel the motion of the Spirit among us. We are grateful for your responsiveness. The first section is Chapters Given Preliminary Approval, which means that they are substantially acceptable to the Yearly Meeting and are not expected to change except perhaps in very minor ways that may become desirable as the book nears completion. The second section, the Appendices Working Paper, has received considerable seasoning and is on its way to being ready, but it needs further seasoning. Please use these Appendices and let us know how well they serve. Are there other elements to add before they are fully useful? We are aware that some of the descriptive parts might more properly belong in the body of the book yet to be written. The third section articulates the vision that has guided us from the beginning and our sense of how this will inform our work as we move forward.

Section 1

CHAPTERS GIVEN PRELIMINARY APPROVAL

A text given preliminary approval is substantially acceptable to Friends for inclusion in the final book. The time period between preliminary and final approval will likely be more than one year. This will allow both the Committee and the Yearly Meeting to have larger sections in front of them before giving final approval to any, knowing that the precise form of a given section will be influenced by what comes before and after.

Complete references to extracts are listed by their number at the back of the book.

PREFACE

This book is a witness to the lived faith of Quakers in New England from the mid-17th century to the present. It is a devotional resource and a handbook of procedures. When procedural questions arise, this book is designed to be a helpful guide, not a rigid instruction manual. Through corporate discernment, we change our structures and procedures in responsive obedience to God.

This revision of NEYM Faith and Practice reflects a range of spiritual experience among Friends. Each selection retains the original language used by the individual or faith community.

Quotations are identified in the text by author and date. Complete references for each source text will be found on page 191. The book is also available electronically at neym.org/fandp/interim.

1 ILLUSTRATIVE EXPERIENCES OF FRIENDS

This chapter states some essentials of Quaker faith, not by articulating them, but by expressing them through the living personal and corporate experiences of Friends. Friends find that faith grows and matures through reflection on experiences of the Light. This rhythm of experience and reflection continues throughout life, opening us to continuing revelation.

An aspect of grace is that the Spirit communicates with us in words, images, and feelings that engage us. It is our task as individuals and as meetings to discover how to live faithfully a path we have been given.

The Spirit may break into our lives in powerful moments of altered consciousness or clarity. The Spirit may also work in a gradual unfolding of understanding and confidence. Often our lives contain a combination of both. What matters is living with integrity, faithful to our own experience.

It is often hard to find words to convey our experiences. How do we express that which is beyond description? Some may be led to use art, music, movement, or other non-verbal ways to express it. Let us listen not only to words, but to actions and lives which witness to the workings of the Spirit.

These extracts show the variety of ways Friends have been inspired to convey in words their experience of seeking and finding truth. While each one expresses a particular experience, together they convey something of the breadth and diversity among Friends, both past and present. They invite us to listen to the spirit from which the words arose.

The Spirit is timeless and Friends may find in the extracts a similarity of experience which serves to draw us together into that which is eternal.

CONVICTION AND CONVINCEMENT

“And this I knew experimentally.”

George Fox 1647

Now after I had received that opening from the Lord that to be bred at Oxford or Cambridge was not sufficient to fit a man to be a minister of Christ, I regarded the priests less, and looked more after the dissenting people ... But as I had forsaken all the priests, so I left the separate preachers also, and those called the most experienced people; for I saw there was none among them all that could speak to my condition. And when all my hopes in them and in all men were gone, so that I had nothing outwardly to help me, nor could tell what to do, then, Oh then, I heard a voice which said, ‘There is one, even Christ Jesus, that can speak to thy condition,’ and when I heard it my heart did leap for joy. Then the Lord did let me see why there was none upon the earth that could speak to my condition, namely, that I might give him all the glory; for all are concluded under sin, and shut up in unbelief as I had been, that Jesus Christ might have

the pre-eminence, who enlightens, and gives grace, and faith, and power. Thus, when God doth work who shall [hinder] it? And this I knew experimentally.

George Fox 1647

1.01

In the year 1652 it pleased the Lord to draw [George Fox] toward us ... My then husband, Thomas Fell, was not at home at that time, but gone to the Welsh circuit, being one of the Judges of Assize, and our house [Swarthmoor Hall] being a place open to entertain ministers and religious people at, one of George Fox[']s friends brought him hither, where he stayed all night. And the next day, being a lecture or a fast-day, he went to Ulverston steeplehouse, but came not in till people were gathered; I and my children had been a long time there before. And when they were singing before the sermon, he came in; and when they had done singing, he stood up upon his seat or form and desired that he might have liberty to speak. And he that was in the pulpit said he might ... [George Fox] went on and said, How that Christ was the Light of the world and lighteth every man that cometh into the world; and that by this Light they might be gathered to God, etc. And I stood up in my pew, and I wondered at his doctrine, for I had never heard such before. And then he went on, and opened the Scriptures, and said, 'The Scriptures were the prophets' words and Christ's and the apostles' words, and what as they spoke they enjoyed and possessed and had it from the Lord.' And said, 'Then what had any to do with the Scriptures, but as they came to the Spirit that gave them forth. You will say, Christ saith this, and the apostles say this; but what canst thou say? Art thou a child of Light and hast walked in the Light, and what thou speakest, is it inwardly from God?' This opened me so that it cut me to the heart; and then I saw clearly we were all wrong. So I sat me down in my pew again, and cried bitterly. And I cried in my spirit to the Lord, 'We are all thieves, we are all thieves, we have taken the Scriptures in words and know nothing of them in ourselves' ... I saw it was the truth, and I could not deny it; and I did as the apostle saith, I 'received the truth in the love of it,' And it was opened to me so clear that I had never a tittle in my heart against it; but I desired the Lord that I might be kept in it, and then I desired no greater portion.

Margaret Fell 1694

1.02

Now to return to my apprenticeship; I had a very kind loving master and mistress, and I had meat enough, and work enough, but had little consideration about religion, nor any taste thereof. On First-days I frequented meetings, and the greater part of my time I slept, and took no account of preaching, nor received any other benefit than being there kept [me] out of bad company, which indeed is a very great service to youth ... but one First-day, being at meeting, a young woman, named Anne Wilson, was there and preached; she was very zealous, and fixing my eye upon her, she with a great zeal pointed her finger at me, uttering these words with much power, 'A traditional Quaker, thou comest to meeting as thou went from it (the last time) and goes from it as thou came to it, but art no better for thy coming, what wilt thou do in the end?' This was so pat to my then condition, that, like Saul, I was smitten to the ground, as it might be said, but turning my thoughts inward, in secret I cried, 'Lord, what shall I do to help it?' And a voice as it were spoke in my heart, saying 'Look unto me, and I will help thee.'

Samuel Bownas 1696

At last, after all my distresses, wanderings, and sore travails, I met with some writings of this people called Quakers, which I cast a slight eye upon and disdained, as falling very short of that wisdom, light, life, and power which I had been longing for, and searching after ... After a long time I was invited to hear one of them (as I had been often, they in tender love pitying me, and feeling my want of that which they possessed) ... when I came, I felt the presence and power of the Most High among them, and words of Truth from the Spirit of Truth reaching to my heart and conscience, opening my state as in the presence of the Lord. Yea, I did not only feel words and demonstrations from without, but I felt the dead quickened, the seed raised; insomuch as my heart (in the certainty of light, and clearness of true sense) said, ‘This is he; this is he; there is no other: this is he whom I have waited for and sought after from my childhood; who was always near me, and had often begotten life in my heart; but I knew him not distinctly, nor how to receive him, or dwell with him.’

Isaac Penington 1667

I was walking across one such green oasis—the lawn outside of St. Michael’s House—when it happened.

Someone spoke to me.

Not with words at first, but with a tremendous physical sensation. I have described it, ever since, as being as if a great hand seized me by the spinal column. I stopped. And I knew something all the way down to the core of me.

The words that came to me reflect just a ghost of the power of the knowing. I’m still working on finding all the implications of that knowing, so no single set of words was going to capture it, but the words were these:

If half a dozen men, armed only with box-cutters¹, can kill thousands, then the day when force could ‘settle’ conflicts—if it ever could—is over and done.

1.03

Mostly, though, what came to me was a sense that the idea of force as a means to peace was just done for me. I had come to believe that, as the chestnut goes, there is no way to peace; that peace is the way.

It was in response to this that I began attending Mt. Toby meeting.

I remember sitting in that first meeting I attended, almost weeping with gratitude, watching Friend after Friend arrive. I’m just a single leaf, I thought. I’m just a single leaf, on a single tree, in a great Forest of those who are seeking peace. And as each Friend settled into their seat, I felt gladness. I felt that I was, at last, surrounded by teachers. I felt that everything was going to be All Right.

¹ Box-cutters were the weapons used by the men who hijacked the planes flown into the World Trade Center and the Pentagon and the plane that crashed in Pennsylvania on September 11, 2001.

My only fear was that I would not be seen as belonging there. It was so transparently clear to me that I did that it made me a little afraid.

Cat Chapin-Bishop 2008

1.04

I was at a very low point. I was sleeping out of doors on the porch close to the hill. A light breeze rustled through the overhanging branches of a great walnut tree. I was very tired. I looked up at the stars edging over the hill in my mood of great despondency. I said to God, 'It's no use. I've tried all I can. I can't do anything more.' All of a sudden I seemed to be swept bodily out of my bed, carried above the trees and held poised in mid-air, surrounded by light—a light so bright that I could hardly look at it. Even when I closed my eyes I could feel it. A fragrance as of innumerable orange blossoms inundated my senses. And there was an echo of far-off music. All was ecstasy. I have no idea whether it lasted a minute or several hours. But for the rest of the night I lay in a state of peace and indescribable joy. How impossible it is to explain such a phenomenon in everyday language, but whatever it was changed my life. It was not a passing illusion. I never was the same again. For days I was terribly happy. The whole world seemed to be illumined, the flower colors were brighter, bird songs gayer, and people were kind, friendly and loving. This exaggerated brilliance faded somewhat with time and the intense sense of communion fluctuated. Later on there were, of course, low moments amidst the high peaks, and there were failures, dry seasons, and the recurring need for patience and perseverance. But I never lost the clarification of mind and spirit that was revealed to me on that night.

Josephine Duvenek 1978

At age thirty, discouraged, broken, facing a profound spiritual crisis, I found myself under the care of a Presbyterian minister who engaged my services in helping edit his doctoral thesis on the subject of community. He was studying the history of Quakers, Mennonites, and the first-century church. I was required to read the Journals of George Fox and John Woolman, works by Elfrida Vipont, Samuel Bownas, and others. I was moved to tears by these works and would cry out in joy, 'This is it, this is what I always hoped against hope was true—Christ can teach his people himself!' I began diligently to put myself in a place to hear God speak. Day after day I sat on a chair in my living room determined that I was going to hear God speak or die. Eight months went by without a word. After those long months, I finally heard God's voice clearly and undeniably.

1.05

That experience has been the high point of my spiritual journey.

I continued my listening and began to record in a journal every possible thought that came to me that could possibly be God's voice. I made note of how each thought felt, tasted, smelled, and shaded. I noted if I felt moved, if it was a new thought or old one, or whether or not there was a sense of character attached to it. Then I studied those notations as I watched my life unfold to see which of those thoughts panned out to be actual leadings. I learned that for me, leadings that were indeed from God came with a sense of being unquestionably true, they came often with an accompanying feeling that gave them color and direction. They came from deep inside rather than from the shallow place in my mind, and they always came in the character of God reflecting the virtues spelled out in the Beatitudes [Matthew 5:3–12]. I became suspect of leadings that were self-serving, self-aggrandizing, judgmental, arrogant, or possible weapons against those who disagreed with me.

Two things subsequently happened that changed my life forever and set me on my present path. One was that without my realizing it, during the time I was waiting to hear from God, I was being transformed radically. Friends and family commented on the changes that were to me imperceptible. At their urging I had to admit that my very basic paradigms had miraculously shifted. My view of money, power, and sexuality had been transformed. My love of attention, control, and material possessions had softened to the point of almost disappearing. Other changes, too profound to describe, were subtly shaping a new person within me. Shortly I recognized the changes in me as being the same virtues described in the passages in Matthew called the beatitudes: poverty of Spirit, meekness, mercifulness, love of peace, purity of heart, hunger for justice. I recognized these virtues as a description of Christ and believed that it was Christ's Spirit that was doing the transforming work within me. A passion arose in me to make one of my life's goals to become the embodiment of those virtues ... to be like Christ.

Secondly, I realized that Friends' spirituality was the only path I knew which believed in transformation directly from God's spirit rather than as a reward for some act or acts of obedience or self-discipline. I embraced that spirituality with a passion and a second life goal presented itself—I wanted to make a difference among Friends.

I now believe that God was teaching me how to receive revelation and respond faithfully to its message. Though I often falter and miss the truth, I have at least found a way to hear and recognize the voice of the one who sees.

Stan Thornberg 2001

Hannah Whitall Smith became so sensitive to the misery she saw in the world that she took to wearing a heavy veil. The following account is her response to that misery seen in the faces of two men sitting opposite her on a tram-car in Philadelphia.

1.06

'O, God, how canst Thou bear it? Thou mightest have prevented it, but didst not. Thou mightest even now change it, but Thou dost not. I do not see how Thou canst go on living, and endure it.' I upbraided God. And I felt I was justified in doing so. Then suddenly God seemed to answer me. An inward voice said, in tones of infinite love and tenderness, 'He shall see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied.' 'Satisfied!' I cried in my heart, 'Christ is to be satisfied! He will be able to look at the world's misery, and then at the travail through which He has passed because of it, and will be satisfied with the result! If I were Christ, nothing could satisfy me but that every human being should in the end be saved, and therefore I am sure that nothing less will satisfy Him.' And with this a veil seemed to be withdrawn from before the plans of the universe, and I saw that it was true, as the Bible says, that 'as in Adam all die—even so in Christ should all be made alive.' As was the first, even so was the second. The 'all' in one case could not in fairness mean less than the 'all' in the other. I saw therefore that the remedy must necessarily be equal to the disease, the salvation must be as universal as the fall ...

I hurried home to get hold of my Bible, to see if the magnificent fact I had discovered could possibly have been all this time in the Bible, and I had not seen it; and the moment I entered the house, I did not wait to take off my bonnet, but rushed at once to the table where I always kept my Bible and Concordance ready for use, and began my search. Immediately the whole Book seemed to be illuminated. ... I turned greedily from page to page of my Bible, fairly laughing aloud for joy at the blaze of light that illuminated it all. It became a new book. Another skin

seemed to have been peeled off every text, and my Bible fairly shone with a new meaning. I do not say with a different meaning, for in no sense did the new meaning contradict the old, but a deeper meaning, the true meaning, hidden behind the outward form of words. The words did not need to be changed, they only needed to be understood; and now at last I began to understand them ...

I had always thought of Him as loving, but now I found out that He was far more than loving: He was love, love embodied and ingrained. I saw that He was, as it were, made out of love, so that in the very nature of things He could not do anything contrary to love ... I saw that, because He is love, He simply, in the very nature of things, must be loving. It is not a matter of choice with Him, but a matter of necessity. And I saw that, once this fact was known, to trust in this God of love would be as natural as to breathe. Every doubting question was answered, and I was filled with an illimitable delight in the thought of having been created by such an unselfish God ... Since I had this sight of the mother-heart of God, I have never been able to feel the slightest anxiety for any of His children; and by His children I do not mean only the good ones, but I mean the bad ones just as much.

Hannah Whitall Smith 1903

At times the sense of Presence would well up in me. I seemed to feel the anguish of God at all the suffering in the world. Sometimes I had to turn away because I could not bear it.

The experience confirmed my intellectual awareness of God as a process, rather than an omnipotent deity outside our human struggles, holding life and death power over mortal. This I know experimentally: God is not outside the universe, but part of it, limited by the same laws of cause and effect, involved in our struggles, working beside us, and unable to save us from the chance disasters that befall us. As I experienced the anguish of God in my own grief, so in time I experienced the compassion of God. God suffers with us. We are not alone. This too, I know experimentally.

1.07

Elizabeth Watson 1977

Bill Kreidler tells of a conversation with a Friend who wanted to hear spiritual stories of the times when things happened to people that they didn't expect, when they were "kicked into the presence of God, heard voices, had a dream that completely changed them."

I remembered that very early one morning several years ago I had such a dream. It was during that period early in the morning when you're in the slow process of waking up ... I kept dozing off. It was also at a very difficult period in my life. I was trying fairly unsuccessfully to cope with some very serious health problems and I was feeling very alone. I was feeling bereft. I was feeling hopeless. ...

It was a very simple dream. I dreamed that Jesus was walking toward me. Jesus got very close to me and he smiled and said, 'When things grow dimmer, you always have me.' And then he walked away.

When I woke up and remembered the dream, the first thought I had was, 'Well, I wasn't really asleep, so it doesn't count.' And then I thought, 'No, if Jesus appears to you in any kind of a dream, it counts.' ... Jesus was saying that if I needed him, he would be there for me. In the times when I was blind, he would help me see.

During the next few weeks, I realized something else: I did need him. To my surprise I realized that I had a new companion on my spiritual journey. I didn't expect this companion, I didn't expect that it would be Jesus, I didn't expect he would ever be this important to me, but at this stage in my spiritual journey, he's exactly the companion I need. It reminds me of an old gospel song, 'Jesus may not come when you want him, but he's right on time.'

To be honest, I'm a little amazed and a little uncomfortable sometimes, to hear myself say, 'I'm a Christian.' I really haven't a clue where this leg of my spiritual journey is going to take me. I do know that I love where I am, even though I don't know where that is. I'm in another cycle of coming out, coming through, coming home.

Bill Kreidler 1993

I want to know not only conscience, but Christ. Yes, but to the sincere experimentalist, using his conscience as a guide, and seeking always to focus his life on that of Jesus Christ as he knows Him in the Gospels, and recognizes Him in His faithful disciples, there comes a time when the line between conscience and Christ grows very thin. There comes a time when the higher life of which I am always aware, and which I have tried to follow, becomes so merged in my thought of Christ and my devotion to Him, that I can hardly distinguish the two in my mind. There comes a time when suddenly I am on my knees, my whole soul flooded with light and love, tears in my heart and eyes, an unspeakable peace enfolding me. The pierced hands have reached through to me at last and draw me gently forth to Him. 'Come unto Me and rest,' and I answer, Yea, for I am hid with Christ in God.

I have sketched, you say, a hypothetical career. No, it is a story from real life. You say I have spoken in mystical language. I answer, Yes, the supreme moment cannot be defined in the dry language of theology, nor can words express it. You say the experience is the result of mental suggestion practised over a term of years. I answer, No one believes that who has once been there and taken off his shoes on holy ground,—the reality is too overpowering, the effect too profound.

John Wilhelm Rowntree 1905

On a certain summer afternoon towards the end of the first quarter of this century, I came home after a long and tiring day and, sitting down in the shade of the garden, I fell into a brown study. Quite unexpectedly I began to talk to myself, and to my surprise, I heard myself saying to myself, 'If you don't take care, you will end up by losing your soul!' The humour of this remark struck me, since, as far as I was aware, I did not believe at that time that I had a soul to lose. Looking back now I realize that particular afternoon marked a turning point in my life. Anyone who begins to refer to his soul as something that can be lost and found has discovered a new field of experience and a new inner reservoir of facts to be studied and related to the outward facts of his ordinary life. This redirection of my search—from an outward search for truth in nature, to an inward search for truth in myself—was the next step necessary for the healing of my own divided mind.

Howard E. Collier 1953

Luke Cock (1657–1740), a butcher by trade and a noted singer, preached at York, England, in 1721. His idiom may be unfamiliar to modern readers, but a translation into today's English could not do justice to his words.

Necessity, Friends, outstrips the law: necessity has made many people go by the Weeping Cross ... I remember I was younce travelling through Shrewsbury, and my Guide said to me: 'I'll show thee the Weeping Cross.' 'Nay,' said I, 'thou need not; I have borne it a great while.' Now this place that he showed me was four lane ends.

I remember when I first met with my Guide. He led me into a very large and cross [place], where I was to speak the truth from my heart—and before I used to swear and lie too for gain. 'Nay, then,' said I to my Guide, 'I mun leave Thee here: if Thou leads me up that lane, I can never follow: I'se be ruined of this butchering trade, if I mun't lie for a gain.' Here I left my Guide, and was filled with sorrow, and went back to the Weeping Cross: and I said, if I could find my good Guide again, I'll follow Him, lead me whither He will. So here I found my Guide again, and began to follow Him up this lane and tell the truth from my heart. I had been nought but beggary and poverty before; and now I began to thrive at my trade, and got to the end of this lane, though with some difficulty.

1.15 But now my Guide began to lead me up another lane, harder than the first, which was to bear
1.08 my testimony in using the plain language. This was very hard; yet I said to my Guide, 'Take my feeble pace, and I'll follow Thee as fast as I can. Don't outstretch me, I pray Thee.' So by degrees I got up here.

But now I was led up the third lane: it was harder still, to bear my testimony against tithes—my wife not being convinced. I said to my Guide, 'Nay, I doubt I never can follow up here: but don't leave me: take my pace, I pray Thee, for I mun rest me.' So I tarried here a great while, till my wife cried, 'We'se all be ruined: what is thee ganging stark mad to follow t'silly Quakers?' Here I struggled and cried, and begged of my Guide to stay and take my pace: and presently my wife was convinced. 'Well,' says she, 'now follow thy Guide, let come what will. The Lord hath done abundance for us: we will trust in Him.' Nay, now, I thought, I'll to my Guide again, now go on, I'll follow Thee truly; so I got to the end of this lane cheerfully. ...

My Guide led me up another lane, more difficult than any of the former, which was to bear testimony to that Hand that had done all this for me. This was a hard one: I thought I must never have seen the end of it. I was eleven years all but one month in it. Here I began to go on my knees and to creep under the hedges, a trade I never forgot since, nor I hope never shall. I would fain think it is impossible for me to fall now, but let him that thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.

I thought to have had a watering: but ye struggle so I cannot get you together. We mun have no watering tonight, I mun leave you every yan to his own Guide.

Luke Cock 1721

The first gleam of light, 'the first cold light of morning' which gave promise of day with its noontide glories, dawned on me one day at meeting, when I had been meditating on my state in great depression. I seemed to hear the words articulated in my spirit, 'Live up to the light thou hast, and more will be granted thee.' Then I believed that God speaks to man by His Spirit. I strove to lead a more Christian life, in unison with what I knew to be right, and looked for brighter days, not forgetting the blessings that are granted to prayer.

Caroline Fox 1841

My brother, Russell, and I were jamming away one afternoon nearly 30 years ago when the improvisation took a turn. We both felt a sense of being taken over by the Spirit, of being played. In the music, we heard a sound of a tune we both knew, and, all of a sudden, we found ourselves moving into an improvisation around that song. As we were playing, we both experienced three waves of light passing through and among us. My eyes were closed, but I saw and felt a warm, powerful light passing through my body and the room. Russell said that he was looking at the linoleum-tiled, flecked floor, when one of the white flecks jumped off the floor, expanded to fill the room and passed through his body. In that moment I experienced a musical and spiritual breakthrough. I was taught the musical concept of modal improvisation and I was given tangible assurance of divine reality. Along with the waves of light, I heard various other instruments and voices of a great orchestra and chorus joining our song. Or, perhaps more likely, we were joining that song. Music is a metaphor for my spiritual journey. In my life, music has moved from a place where I retreat, to fill my soul, to a place of prayer, where my soul overflows. ... In recent years, I continue to play music. I love to accompany singing on guitar and still jam away at my violin. Now there is jamming, or improvisation, with a group and then there is doing scales. Spiritual discipline, individual prayer is like playing scales. Meeting for worship is like jamming together with Friends. I cannot control the ways in which God's grace is offered, but I can work on my receptiveness to that grace.

The experience of the waves of light passing through my brother and me was grace. The preparation to receive that grace took a lot of scales.

Jonathan Vogel-Borne 2000

What is salvation? Salvation, for me, is the coming into harmony with the song God is singing. I can only express it as a musical metaphor. There's something visceral and non-verbal about it. If you've ever been trying to come into harmony and you've not been in harmony and then you are, you know what I mean. It is not an event, it is a place, it is happening always anew, and yet it's a place to reside. When I find the center, when I am still and open, I find myself in that harmony, and since time is not a property of God, when I am there I am adjacent to eternity, and if that is what is waiting for me when my body falls away, I am eager for it, and I know it will seem familiar.

Brian Drayton 2005

1.09

During the fall of my freshman year in college I used to escape the stress of crowded high-rise dorm life by taking my books onto a grassy stretch of lawn to study. One afternoon as I stretched out on the grass to take a break I found myself growing more and more relaxed and peaceful. I wasn't falling asleep, I was just resting. My breathing slowed and the outside world fell away. I became aware of the most delightful soft laughter and felt a profound sense of welcome, as though I had entered a room full of people who had been eagerly waiting just for me. As I lay there, a young man approached and asked me the time. I sat up when I heard his voice but was so disoriented I couldn't understand him until he pointed to his wrist indicating a watch. I managed to tell him the time but he looked at me very strangely when he thanked me. The same young man found me in the same spot again the next day and introduced himself. I apologized having been so vague but he said he'd actually come back particularly to find me. He had been astonished the day before, because when I had turned to face him, I was glowing.

Marion Athearn 2011

I do personally experience the presence of Christ. Usually when I am singing. And sometimes when I am praying or even occasionally during the preaching. I feel the presence in my body but it's not like any other feeling I ever have. I feel closer to God and close to other members of the choir. We often all feel the feeling at once but in different ways. I forget the rest of the world in that moment. It is just me and the choir and God. It is good that we forget the world at these times. Often members of my choir lead hard lives. Some have been chased out of their house at night by war. But they come to church and sing. Singing heals us. I have recently learned that some Friends call this 'being gathered,' and that they experience it in the silence. It amazes me that you can have this without singing.

1.10

The first time that I really experienced God for myself came through prayer. I started praying on my own when I was nine years old. One day I prayed for protection and I really saw a response from God. Since then, prayer has become important in so many ways. I feel good and peaceful after talking to God. God always puts feelings in my heart to warn me of danger.

Hayo Daniella, age 15, 2005

As a teenager I looked for proof of the existence of God, but soon realised that there would be none. I chose to adopt as a working hypothesis a belief in God, and to go on from there. I have not felt the need to revise that hypothesis—yet. I believe in a powerful, all-knowing God, but a caring and a forgiving God. I believe he says to us: 'All right, you've got life, get on with it, live it! I am there behind to guide you, to help you live it; but don't expect me to interfere to make life smooth for you—you are old enough to stand on your own two feet.'

Jocelyn S. Burnell 1976

While Caitlin Caulfield was spending her 17th year far away from her Alaska home, she had to deal simultaneously with an unfamiliar culture, a friend's death, and her mother's life-threatening illness.

Well, I've been doing a lot of thinking. Meditating, more like it. Today, in my first class, it came to me that what I should be doing is making origami cranes for Mumma. And now, after having made a hundred, I know why. It's partly for the cranes, partly for Mumma. But mostly, the folding allows me time to go inward ... I haven't 'got religion.' But I felt God while I was folding cranes. I also had an epiphany of sorts about the concept of 'holding in the Light.' I always had this vague idea that it was praying, asking, 'Please, let Mumma get better' (for example). As I was folding, I realized I was truly holding Mumma, and my friend who died, in the Light ... As for holding in the Light, it's not about praying. It's about saying, 'Look here, God. This stuff is devastating. Right now, the world doesn't make sense. But I can't make it make sense. I wouldn't even know where to begin. So whatever needs to happen—that is what should happen.' Holding in the Light is an act of complete surrender, completely letting go and just trusting. Just trusting.

Caitlin Caulfield 2005

While I was too young to have any religion of my own, I had come to a home where religion kept its fires always burning. We had very few 'things,' but we were rich in invisible wealth. I was not 'christened' in a church, but I was sprinkled from morning to night with the dew of religion. We never ate a meal which did not begin with a hush of thanksgiving; we never began a day without 'a family gathering' at which mother read a chapter of the Bible after which there would follow a weighty silence. These silences, during which all the children of our family were hushed

with a kind of awe, were very important features of my spiritual development. There was work inside and outside the house waiting to be done, and yet we sat there hushed and quiet, doing nothing. I very quickly discovered that something real was taking place. We were feeling our way down to that place from which living words come, and very often they did come. Some one would bow and talk with God so simply and quietly that He never seemed far away. The words helped to explain the silence. We were now finding what we had been searching for. When I first began to think of God I did not think of Him as very far off. At a meeting some of the Friends who prayed shouted loud and strong when they called upon Him, but at home He always heard easily and He seemed to be there with us in the living silence. My first steps in religion were thus acted. It was a religion which we did together. Almost nothing was said in the way of instructing me. We all joined together to listen for God, and then one of us talked to Him for the others. In these simple ways my religious disposition was being unconsciously formed and the roots of my faith in unseen realities were reaching down far below my crude and childish surface thinking.

Rufus Jones 1926

1.11

CORPORATE WORSHIP

“... the kingdom of heaven did gather us, and catch us all, as in a net ...”

Frances Howgill 1663

[F]or, when I came into the silent assemblies of God’s people, I felt a secret power among them, which touched my heart; and as I gave way unto it I found the evil weakening in me and the good raised up; and so I became thus knit and united unto them, hungering more and more after the increase of this power and life whereby I might feel myself perfectly redeemed; and indeed this is the surest way to become a Christian; to whom afterwards the knowledge and understanding of principles will not be wanting, but will grow up so much as is needful as the natural fruit of this good root, and such a knowledge will not be barren nor unfruitful.

Robert Barclay 1678

[And] the kingdom of heaven did gather us, and catch us all as in a net; and his heavenly power at one time drew many hundreds to land; that we came to know a place to stand in, and what to wait in; and the Lord appeared daily to us, to our astonishment, amazement, and great admiration; insomuch that we often said one unto another, with great joy of heart: ‘What! is the kingdom of God come to be with men? And will he take up his tabernacle among the sons of men, as he did of old? And what! shall we, that were reckoned as the outcasts of Israel, have this honour of glory communicated amongst us, which were but men of small parts, and of little abilities, in respect of many others, as amongst men?’

Francis Howgill 1663

On one never-to-be-forgotten Sunday morning, I found myself one of a small company of silent worshippers who were content to sit down together without words, that each one might feel after and draw near to the Divine Presence, unhindered at least, if not helped, by any human utterance. Utterance I knew was free, should the words be given; and, before the meeting was over, a sentence or two were uttered in great simplicity by an old and apparently untaught man, rising in his place amongst the rest of us. I did not pay much attention to the words he spoke, and I have no recollection of their purport. My whole soul was filled with the unutterable peace of the undisturbed opportunity for communion with God, with the sense that at last I had found

1.12 a place where I might, without the faintest suspicion of insincerity, join with others in simply seeking His presence. To sit down in silence could at the least pledge me to nothing; it might open to me (as it did that morning) the very gate of heaven. And, since that day, now more than seventeen years ago, Friends' meetings have indeed been to me the greatest of outward helps to a fuller and fuller entrance into the spirit from which they have sprung; the place of the most soul-subduing, faith-restoring, strengthening, and peaceful communion, in feeding upon the bread of life, that I have ever known.

Caroline E. Stephen 1890

In Quaker meeting I've had the remarkable sensation of observing the room through the eyes of a bird perched high on a window looking in; and sitting quietly with my eyes closed, I've felt everything in the room—plants, people, furniture and the Presence penetrating everything—melt together. In the shining joy that accompanies this phenomenon, my differentiated consciousness is a drop of water in the divine sea, not separate but flowing together with all consciousness, all experience. The drop does re-separate and I return to just being myself. But in the lingering glow of what I've seen, everything I touch, every person I pass, I recognize as—well, as me, as part of the same sacred identity. There is really in essence no I, you, and it—just we, and we are within the much larger identity of holy universality.

Warren Ostram 1986

1.13 I have experienced in some silence-based meetings for worship, especially memorial meetings, the overwhelming, loving presence of the Spirit in a silence which is almost physically heavy, as though a great chord has just been played. Beyond doubt the whole meeting feels it together. Once we have experienced this, we know the existence of the living God, and nothing that ever happens can take this certainty away from us.

William Burt Kriebel 2002

In pastoral meetings it is common for the pastor to give a message at meeting for worship, for which preparation is made ahead of time.

Often, as I work, I sense a stirring, an excitement, a focus, that seems more than just a pleasure in the creative process of finding the right words to express something. I feel the quality of message in my body, coming through my typing fingers, rather than out of my mouth; knowing that when those words come to be spoken on Sunday, there will be that stirring of the Spirit once again ... I do my best work when I prepare well ahead of time and give the message time to soak into me. Often I find it is what I really need to hear myself.

Maggie Edmondson 2007

MINISTRY AND ELDERING

"All faithful people are not called to public ministry, but whoever are, are called to minister of that which they have tasted and handled spiritually. The outward modes of worship are various, but whenever men are true ministers of Jesus Christ it is from the operation of his spirit upon their hearts ..."

John Woolman c. 1742

In the year 1755, being in company with Comfort Hoag and her companion, from New England, then on a religious visit to Friends in this part of the country, I attended a meeting with them in which I felt a concern to speak to the assembly, but, as usual, evaded it.

After meeting Comfort said to me, 'David, why didst thou not preach today?' I smiled at the query, seeming to wonder that she should ask such a question, and endeavored to appear innocent and ignorant of any concern of that kind. As she knew nothing of me but what she had felt, (having never before seen or heard of me) she said no more.

On the following day a similar concern came upon me, and I evaded it as before. After meeting Comfort again said to me, 'David, why didst thou not preach today?' I endeavored to pass it by, as I did before; but she said it was not worth while to evade it, for she was assured that I ought to have preached that day, and that I had almost spoiled her meeting by refraining, which had hindered her service. When I found I could not conceal my faults, I confessed the whole, and told her I had been for more than twenty years in that practice; and then gave her a history of my life from the beginning down to that day. She admired that divine kindness was yet manifested toward me in such manner, seeing I had so long rebelled against it, and then gave me suitable caution and advice.

The following day, being at meeting, I again felt a concern to speak to the people, but endeavored to evade it. ... Thus I spent the greater part of an hour. At length my divine Master, the great Master Builder, thus addressed me, 'Why dost thou still delay. Desiring to be excused until a more convenient season? There never will be a better time than this. I have waited on thee above twenty years; I have clearly made known to thee my will, so that all occasion of doubt has been removed; yet thou hast refused to submit until thy day is far spent; and if thou dost not speedily comply with my commands, it will be too late; thy opportunity will be lost.'

I then clearly saw that if I were forsaken, and left to myself, the consequence would be death and darkness forever! At the sight of the horrible pit that yawned for me, if I continued in disobedience, my body trembled like an aspen leaf, and my soul was humbled within me! Then I said, 'Lord! Here am I; make what thou wouldst have me to be; leave me not in displeasure, I beseech thee.' All my power to resist was then suspended; ... and was raised on my feet, I hardly knew how, and expressed in a clear and distinct manner what was on my mind.

When I had taken my seat Comfort Hoag rose, and had an open, favorable opportunity to speak to the assembly.

After meeting she told me that, during the time we had sat in silence, her whole concern was on my account; that her anxiety for my deliverance from that bondage was such, that she was willing to offer up her natural life to the Lord, if it might be a means to bring me forth in the ministry; and that on making that offering I rose to speak. On which her anxiety for me was removed, and her mind filled with concern for the people present.

David Ferris 1755

When I grew to about thirteen years of age, I began to discover something about me, or in my mind, like the heavenly anointing for the ministry; for the Lord had revealed His word as a hammer and had broken the rock in pieces in my living experience; and I was contrited under a sense of power and love; saying even vocally when alone, 'Lord, make me a chosen vessel unto Thee' ...

With respect to my first appearances [in ministry, when about seventeen years old] ... I shrunk from it exceedingly; and often have I hesitated, and felt such a reluctance to it, that I have suffered the meeting to break up without my having made the sacrifice: yea, when the word of life in a few words was like a fire within me ...

It pleased the Lord to call me into a path much untrodden, in my early travels as a messenger of the Gospel, having to go into markets and to declare the truth in the streets ... No one knows the depth of my sufferings and the mortifying, yea, crucifying of my own will, which I had to endure in this service; yet I have to acknowledge to the sufficiency of divine grace herein ... In the year 1801, I wrote thus: 'O heavenly Father, Thou hast seen me in the depth of tribulation, in my many journeyings and travels ... It was Thy power which supported me when no flesh could help, when man could not comprehend the depth of mine exercise ... Be Thou only and for ever exalted in, by and through Thy poor child, and let nothing be able to pluck me out of Thy hand.'

Sarah Lynes Grubb 1832

I remember an instance in my own experience, very painfully corroborating this danger to which ministers—especially those who have abundant words at command—are exposed; and it has been instructively brought to my remembrance, as a watchword of caution and warning, to keep me from falling again in this way. Many years since, while traveling in Truth's service, I attended a meeting in which I felt my mind much enlarged in Gospel love, and in travail on behalf of the people then assembled, and I think that I have very seldom, if ever, been more favored with a distinct and clear opening for extensive labor, than on this occasion. I stood up in this opening, and began by repeating three or four disjointed passages of Scripture, as they had been presented to my mind, expecting to go on and show how they harmoniously blended together when properly considered, in establishing and enforcing important principles of Christian doctrines and testimonies. I had, however, no sooner uttered these disjointed and apparently opposite sentences, than I felt a check in my mind, with a gentle intimation that I ought at once to sit down and proceed no further. But feeling a fear that some tender, seeking minds then present, would be stumbled and wounded at what they would probably think to be the opposing sentiments which I had uttered, I concluded, after standing awhile silently considering my painfully embarrassing position, that I had better, in as few words as possible, inform the meeting how it had been with me, so that no tender mind might be hurt; firmly intending, after this short explanation, to take my seat. But before I got through with my explanation, the subject a little revived, and words came so pressingly upon me for utterance, that I could find no place for stopping; and so I went on, pouring out words, and passing from subject to subject, with a rapidity such as I have never known before or since. During all this time, I trembled in every limb with fear and amazement, feeling an unholy fire in my heart; so that at last I concluded, that it was the devil that had now set me to preaching, and that he would never suffer me to stop, but that I should have to stand there, preaching at his bidding, till I died.

It is a fearful thing to slight even the gentlest intimations of the Lord's will; and I had additionally transgressed, in endeavoring, with the best intentions, but in my own will and wisdom, to patch up and mend that which the Lord had marred, and dearly did I pay for my presumption and disobedience.

Joseph Hoag 1832

1.16

When it was time for the ‘keynote’ I carried a chair over my head through the sea of people and chairs so I could sit up front, but off to one side. [JH] stood near the fireplace and spoke on her feet, with just a chair near her containing a few pages of notes. A centering silence to begin, and then the words began to flow out of her, at first a well-organized and well-delivered flow of ideas to flood the expectant openness with a first calm lake of shared understanding. But the calm, quiet stream began to build in depth and power to a message of elegant, one-pointed coherence and wisdom and saving power, full of Life. There was not one false or hesitant note. I did not look at her, I was deeply submerged in prayer—she was the only person in the room for me. I could feel her drawing energy from my prayer. I could feel her making her way into deeper and deeper waters, surely, clearly, with complete trust. The words and quotes came to her exactly when they were needed. I could feel something hugely important coming; it was just out of sight. I felt her gather herself. I ‘woke-up’ intensely alert in my prayer, and found this prayer form in me: ‘Please Jesus, stand near to her; hold her and whisper in her ear the words You would have her say.’ And just then she paused for the briefest moment and turned her message in a new and far deeper direction saying ‘But these are just words, a lot of words, when what is really asked of us is communion, instead of communication—a communion that is beyond all words.’

1.17

And I said, ‘Why thank you Jesus for saying so clearly that you are here and this is what you want us to know.’ This was maybe 2/3 of the way through the 40-minute talk. I was so drawn in by hearing Jesus that my brain stopped working. I couldn’t imagine there was anything more to say. But there was, and she went gracefully back to edifying us about the need for, and importance of the disciplines; about how it is open hearts and listening ears that draw out the Divine messages. Towards the end I asked myself if there was anything more she had wanted to talk about and I realized she had not really explained ‘elders.’ So shortly after that she fully and beautifully expressed the elder’s gift, the loneliness and missed opportunity of unrecognized, uncalled-out elders in a meeting; Friends who come with their natural gifts of eldering exercised every week but who are ignored and unrecognized in their meetings.

When she finished and sat down next to me I was moved to reach over and place my hand on her knee, firmly, and squeeze. She instantly clasped my hand and held it tightly for a long, deep moment until she just as decisively let go. We settled into a deep held silence until it was time to close the meeting.

Susan Davies 2007

Despite feeling ill-qualified for the task, Sue Reilly agreed, after praying with her care committee, to give a presentation to a meeting dealing with a distressing conflict on the topic of spiritual health of meetings.

I began the presentation while Friends listened politely. When I came to the subject of how meetings handle conflict, I remarked that they knew something about conflict. It was then that God took over the evening and I sat back, holding the process in prayer. For the first time, they were able to talk with one another without emotional distress.

- 1.18 As I was driving home, I was overcome with a sense of total oneness—a sense of being part of everything and not existing as a separate entity. Words do not begin to convey the power of that unity—floating, a total lack of fear, being held in perfect love, not disappearing but becoming more. I had a feeling of gratitude for being able to live in holy surrender, that anxiety and feelings of inadequacy for the task did not prevent me from saying ‘yes’ when it was clear from the discernment that it was mine to do. I realized that if I were truly following a leading I would not be abandoned and did not need to be afraid.

Susan Reilly 2009

DARKNESS AND LIGHT

“I saw also that there was an ocean of darkness and death, but an infinite ocean of light and love, which flowed over the ocean of darkness. And in that also I saw the infinite love of God; and I had great openings.”

George Fox (1647)

I was under great temptations sometimes, and my inward sufferings were heavy; but I could find none to open my condition to but the Lord alone, unto whom I cried night and day. And I went back into Nottinghamshire, and there the Lord shewed me that the natures of those things which were hurtful without, were within in the hearts and minds of wicked men ... And I cried to the Lord, saying, ‘Why should I be thus, seeing I was never addicted to commit those evils?’ And the Lord answered that it was needful I should have a sense of all conditions, how else should I speak to all conditions; and in this I saw the infinite love of God. I saw also that there was an ocean of darkness and death, but an infinite ocean of light and love, which flowed over the ocean of darkness. And in that also I saw the infinite love of God; and I had great openings.

George Fox 1647

- 1.19 I often remember a time when I was in some sadness of spirit, and I went into our little village church at evensong. One of the psalms we were chanting suddenly had something to say to me. ... [W]e came to a passage which had often puzzled me: ‘Who passing through the valley of Baca make it a well,’ I found the words were different. They were translated: ‘Who going through the vale of misery use it for a well.’ At that moment I realised that our times of despair, our times of sorrow, our times of suffering, can all be used as a well. ... Let us not waste our sorrows, our sufferings, our moments of despair. We must use them. We must use them for a well, and the living water will spring up and refresh our spirits, and the spirits of those around us.

Elfrida Vipont Foulds 1983

Sandra Cronk writes of her experience after her father’s death.

- 1.20 In the pain and loss, which were acute, I had a curious experience of God’s presence. That was true at the beginning and it has remained true these two years. It was curious because I had heretofore assumed that such pain and emptiness were incompatible with a strong sense of God’s presence. But that is untrue. Those people who recommend a stronger prayer life as though grief is synonymous with loss of faith in God are quite mistaken. I could and did have experiences of joy and loss at the same time in God.

Sandra L. Cronk 1985

My beloved daughter faces a life-threatening, life-changing disease. It is not in my belief system to ask God for a miracle cure but to be present with us as I walk along the path of her illness. I am faithful to the practice of lighting a morning candle, opening the window to the outside world, no matter the weather. I look to see what God has brought to me this day; what beauty, what changes, what companions from the natural world. I read sacred literature and I pray. I ask with hope that the mist clears from my eyes so that I glimpse/feel/understand the presence of the Spirit and I am always utterly surprised when insight pops into my consciousness. Most of all, I relinquish my heart to utter trust. This faithful, everyday practice builds my own sensitivity to the movement of the Spirit in my heart. It nourishes me enough to face the challenges I am given and to embrace gifts of happiness and wisdom. At the darkest moments, the Spirit is my resource.

Marybeth Toomey 2010

Thus having in a great measure lost my own Guide, and darkness being come upon me, I sought a place where I might have been alone, to weep and cry before the Lord, that His face I might find, and my condition recover: But then my adversary who had long waited his opportunity, had got in, and bestirred himself every way, so that I could not be hid, and diverse messages came to me in that case, some true, some false (as I have seen since). ... [Y]ea, the provocations of that time of temptation was exceeding great against the pure love of God, yet He left me not; ... my adversary so prevailed, that all things were turned and perverted against my right seeing, hearing or understanding, only a secret hope and faith I had in my God, whom I had served, that He would bring me through it, and to the end of it; and that I should see again the day of my redemption from under it all: And this quieted my soul in my greatest tribulation.

James Nayler 1659

1.21

It was a memorable meeting—held in silence, however, as usual, never to be forgotten. Very soon after sitting down, great was the awfulness and the reverence that came upon me. It was succeeded by such a view and sense of my sinful life, that I was like one crushed under the mill stones. My misery was great; my cry was not unlike that of Isaiah; ‘Woe is me, for I am undone!’ The nearer I was then favoured to approach to Him ‘who dwelleth in the light,’ the more I saw my uncleanness and my wretchedness. But how can I set forth the fullness of heavenly joy that filled me when the hope was again raised that there was One, even He whom I had pierced, Jesus Christ, the Redeemer, that was able to save me? ... On my earnest petition being put to Him, the language was proclaimed: ‘Thy sins are forgiven, thy iniquities are pardoned.’ Floods of tears of joy and gratitude gave vent to the fullness of my heart!

Stephen Grellet 1798

Tom Fox was a member of the Christian Peacekeeper Team in Iraq. Margaret Hassan, an aid worker, was kidnapped and killed in 2004. Tom Fox was kidnapped in 2005 and killed in 2006. This extract is from his journal for Saturday, December 25, 2004.

At a team worship time soon after the kidnapping of Margaret Hassan I [had] a very clear image. It was of a land of shadows and darkness. But within that land candles were burning; not many but enough to shed some light on the landscape. Some candles disappeared and it was my sense that their light was taken away for protection. Other candles burned until nothing was left and a small number of candles seemed to have their light snuffed out by the shadows and the darkness. What was most striking to me was that as the candles which burned until the

end and the candles whose light was snuffed out ceased to burn more candles came into being seemingly to build on their light. ... [It's] my sense that removing ourselves from the shadows and darkness will never create the capacity for those living in the shadows to grow in the light.

Tom Fox 2004

As many candles lighted and put in one place do greatly augment the light, and makes it more to shine forth; so when many are gathered together into the same Life, there is more of the glory of God, and his powers appear to the refreshment of each individual for that he partakes not only of the Light and life raised in himself but in all the rest.

Robert Barclay 1678

Our witness is that the Kingdom of God is among us now, accessible to all who will allow it to re-orient and guide their lives. You and I and any who wish to join us can live in a profoundly different way, and we don't have to wait for permission from some human authority to do so. Our meeting communities are the primary locus for this witness—but only when we learn to love one another. That means loving the Friend who annoys me most, whose spiritual vocabulary sets my teeth on edge, who is most different from me or most challenging to me. That means loving all those who call themselves Friends who have adopted the pastoral system, or call themselves evangelicals, or seem to be stuck in old-fashioned ways of speaking and dressing, or who seem to be more concerned about their political activism than their spiritual health. If we can't love one another, we have no ground on which to stand for witnessing to the rest of the world that they can and should love one another across much more profound divisions.

1.22

Lloyd Lee Wilson 2006

I cannot escape from the reality of pain, but I can experience 'joy' in trying to stop (and at the very least lessen) the impact of social and economic injustice on the larger community. As a Friend I am called to witness to a living goodness that exists in all women and men. For me that often means confronting that which negates a positive life experience. I must reflect in the silence of worship, finding strength in my spiritual community, and move onward towards an active expression of my belief. ... As a Black, I view the relationship of Christianity to people of color as radical in its expression, serving as a liberating force. An important voice in the Black religious community, James Cone, points out that 'Being black in America has little to do with skin color. To be black means that your heart, your soul, your mind and your body are where the dispossessed are.' ... This is where I stand as a member of the Religious Society of Friends.

Greg Williams 1983

1.23

It's a long journey, this hike to Zion, and as much as God's kingdom is here and now—and I believe it is—the journey is neither short nor easy. Zion is a long way off, and it takes a lot of marching, a lot of loving, and Spirit-powered GPS. It's so long that it's generational. Walking along with our spiritual ancestors is not as quaint as it might sound on first blush. Surely Elias Hicks studiously avoids Joseph Hoag and Stephen Grellet; John Wilber and Joseph John Gurney look askance at each other. Plain friends roll their eyes at Margaret Fell's red cloak and Elizabeth Fry's purple shoes. A whole group of Friends shun Hannah and Joel Bean. But it is easy for us

modern Friends to feel some kind of bond with these folk, to see the places we're connected and to look with generous eye at differences. It's an arduous trek to get to the 'beautiful city of God.' We need to lean on each other's love today just as we love our spiritual foremothers and forefathers, accentuating our commonalities and looking kindly at our differences. We need the wisdom of our spiritual ancestors. We need the forgiveness and love of each other, and we need the good hiking shoes of an open heart.

Carl Williams 2009

- 1.24 Someone in worship today gave a brief summary of the naturalistic interpretation of religion. How rational, judicious, and powerless seemed our intellectual expressions and how little they met the need of a young attender, obviously in need of deeper ministry, who left, overcome by emotion, in the middle of meeting. The real ministry of our meeting came from the concern of several who followed him out to give him comfort. I saw that such loving kindness, call it love or agape, is the manifestation in the natural world of that which transcends it. Love does have power—not the political or mechanical power the world seems to covet, but a basic power that works in another way, not by overcoming but by reunion. Such a working, when it points to its source, can be called a miracle—not a breach of nature, but an inbreak of love.

Carol Murphy 1989

I have felt welcome through the open doors of the Quaker Meeting as a refugee from church. I have been given space and direction to make my peace with God, with the Spirit, with Jesus in the loving mix of Christians, Jews, Universalists and Atheists whom I love and who are here to stay. And I love to unite with them in that Friend of Friends that may or may not be God, that is here in the sanctuary of the heart always present to teach us directly ...

I am more Christian in Spanish than in English: more Universalist in English than in Spanish. What I believe does not matter as much as what I can say with conviction, what I hear inside me lovingly convicting me, what roots me to a life established and convinced.

Benigno Sanchez-Eppler 2007

Thomas Kelly was working in Germany in 1938 when he wrote the following in a letter to his wife.

- 1.25 This summer has opened up what was already opening up before, a new sense of unreserved dedication of oneself to a life of childlike devotion to God. This comes not of the feeling that one has of having looked into the awful depths of human woe, overwhelming as that is. What I want to say does not grow out of any specific external influence—it seems to grow out of an internal influence, which is so overwhelming that I can only recognize it as God working within me. Last winter you know I was much shaken by the experience of Presence—something that I did not seek, but that sought me. ... And the work here this summer, or, in the midst of the work here this summer, has come an increased sense of being laid hold on by a Power, a gentle, loving, but awful Power. And it makes one know the reality of God at work in the world. And it takes away the old self-seeking, self-centered self, from which selfishness I have laid heavy burdens on you, dear one ...

It would be easy to say that what I say here is growing out of the summer's deep experience with tragedy. One often says to oneself, 'What right have I to live in such comfortable circumstances at Haverford, when the world is aflame?' And we can't, as the average American is now living,

accepting things as naturally our right. If we use them, and live in such parklike surroundings, with privileges I never appreciated before, it is a holy trust, out of which we must make something that is an offering to the wounds of this terrible world. But what I have said goes deeper than this reaction to human suffering. It is grounded not in time and suffering, but in the Eternal, as He breaks into us and teaches us His final nature, as love. But the suffering of the world is a part too of the life of God, and so maybe, after all, it is a revelation.

Thomas Kelly 1938

1.26

Corder Catchpool served in the Friends Ambulance Unit during the first World War. When conscription was introduced he refused to accept conditional exemption from military service and was imprisoned. He then devoted himself to work for peace and reconciliation particularly in Germany where he and his wife and family lived from 1931 to 1936.

I often wish earnestly that I had a more unwavering and unshakeable conviction, more of Paul and less of Thomas. But I am with the man who said: 'I believe; help thou my unbelief.' Perhaps such a frail faith brings me nearer to others who suffer similarly, and even better able to help them, as I have always been clear that I could not take the negative attitudes. By this I mean, I am for Christ, not for doubt—only I wish there were not so much that I don't yet understand. The difficulty is a hesitation as to whether I really desire 'revelation' in the sense of striking experience such as has brought conviction to some ... I am by nature on my guard against subjectivity and feel that in my own case it may be best to share the occasional gleam with the multitude, rather than stand in the blaze on the mountain-top with the elect.

1.27

Corder Catchpool 1934

Corder Catchpool wrote that he "seemed to be at least fifty per cent rationalist in make-up" and that part of him demanded answers to the difficult questions of Christian thought. While on an alpine ascent, he had the following experience.

The lazy clouds, that had hung all day as a light veiling about the snow-powdered rock peaks, were just breaking up in the clear splendor of sunset. The dazzling mantles of Combin and Courbassière caught the last rays. It was no moment for reasoning. Too often my spiritual life runs shamefully shallow, lamentably in need of more living water from the eternal springs. May I be pardoned—I was utterly unworthy—but at that moment there swept over me unbidden, the experience of Christ. No mere tiresome ratiocination, interpretations or misinterpretations, dogmas and differences. Just the fact that, in Christ, God was and is sharing the tragedy and sorrow, and the joy of the world. And—most glorious assurance—in his death and resurrection he faced the worse the world can do, faced these same problems and perplexities with all their mental anguish, which so often beat us till we cry inwardly for quarter—Christ faced them and triumphed over them and through them, with and for man in his struggle after righteousness, for all time.

Corder Catchpool 1935

WITNESS

"Take heed, dear Friends, to the promptings of love and truth in your hearts, which are the leadings of God."

Epistles of the Yearly Meeting of Pennsylvania and the Jerseys, 1694 and 1695

I had to do it. ... I think that is the real essence of a leading: you have to go do it ... to the extent that it makes you laugh at yourself. I think if you can laugh about the amount of absurdity and the contradiction and the amount of passion that comes through, that to me is a sign of active spiritual life rather than misguided egotism. ... One of the blessings and burdens in my leading is that I've always had a great deal of certainty. I've not had any doubt from the beginning that this is a life work. ... I did not know where it was going or what it was leading to or what it would look like. But I knew that they (my guides) had me, and I was theirs forever, and they called me to surrender.

John Calvi 2001

I was at the plow, meditating on the things of God, and suddenly I heard a voice, saying unto me, 'Get thee out from thy kindred, and from thy father's house.' And I had a promise given in with it. Whereupon I did exceedingly rejoice, that I had heard the voice of that God which I had professed from a child, but had never known him. ...

[A]nd when I came at home, I gave up my estate, cast out my money; but not being obedient in going forth, the wrath of God was upon me, so that I was made a wonder to all; and none thought I would have lived. But (after I was made willing) I began to make some preparation, as apparel and other necessities, not knowing whither I should go: but shortly afterward, going a gate-ward with a friend from my own house, having on an old suit, without any money, having neither taken leave of wife or children, not thinking then of any journey, I was commanded to go into the west, not knowing whether I should go, nor what I was to do there: but when I had been there a little while, I had given me what I was to declare; and ever since I have remained, not knowing today what I was to do tomorrow ...

[The promise was] that God would be with me: which promise I find made good every day.

James Nayler 1652

Drafted into the Union Army July 13, 1863, Cyrus Guernsey Pringle of Charlotte, Vermont, and a small group of Friends steadfastly not only refused to fight, but refused to engage in the common practice of paying a "substitute" to fight in their places, or to provide any service that would free another man to fight. Despite imprisonment, psychological distress, and torture, these Friends held fast to their Guide and stayed firm in their conviction not to provide alternative service, even when urged to do so by the wider body of Friends. Pringle and his fellow resisters were finally released by order of President Lincoln at the urging of influential Friends.

Here we are in prison in our own land for no crimes, no offence to God nor man; nay, more: we are here for obeying the commands of the Son of God and the influences of his Holy Spirit. I must look for patience in this dark day. I am troubled too much and excited and perplexed. ... Yesterday my mind was much agitated: doubts and fears and forebodings seized me. I was alone, seeking a resting-place and finding none. It seemed as if God had forsaken me in this dark hour; and the Tempter whispered, that after all I might be only the victim of a delusion. My prayers for faith and strength seemed all in vain. But this morning I enjoy peace, and feel as though I could face anything ... Oh, praise be to the Lord for the peace and love and resignation that has filled my soul today! Oh, the passing beauty of holiness! There is a holy life that is above fear; it is a close communion with Christ. I pray for this continually but am not free from the

shadow of the tempter. There is ever present with us the thought that perhaps we shall serve the Lord the most effectually by our death, and desire, if that be the service He requires of us, that we may be ready and resigned.

Cyrus Pringle 1863

William Rotch (1734–1828), a leader in the Quaker community on Nantucket, had a consignment of bayonets taken from muskets which he had accepted 12 years earlier in payment of a debt and sold as hunting pieces. In 1776 the colonial army demanded Rotch give them the bayonets.

The time was now come to endeavor to support our Testimony against War, or abandon it, as this very instrument was a severe test. I could not hesitate which to choose, and therefore denied the applicant. My reason for not furnishing them was demanded, to which I readily answered, ‘As this instrument is purposely made and used for the destruction of mankind, I can put no weapon into a man’s hand to destroy another, that I cannot use myself in the same way.’ The person left me much dissatisfied. Others came, and received the same denial. It made a great noise in the Country, and my life was threatened. I would gladly have beaten them into ‘pruning hooks,’ but I took an early opportunity of throwing them into the sea.

A short time after I was called before a Committee appointed by the Court then held at Watertown near Boston, and questioned, amongst other things respecting my bayonets.

I gave a full account of my proceedings, and closed it with saying, ‘I sunk them in the bottom of the sea, I did it from principle, I have ever been glad that I had done it, and if I am wrong I am to be pitied.’ The chairman of the Committee Major Hawley (a worthy character) then addressed the Committee, and said ‘I believe Mr. Rotch has given us a candid account, and every man has a right to act consistently with his religious principles, but I am sorry that we could not have the bayonets, for we want them very much.’ The Major was desirous of knowing more of our principles on which I informed him as far as he enquired. One of the Committee in a pert manner observed ‘then your principles are passive Obedience and non-resistance.’ I replied, ‘No, my friend, our principles are active Obedience or passive suffering.’

William Rotch 1814

1.29 *The writer’s brother joined the Army National Guard and served in Iraq.*

I must also live out my understanding of peace and what it means to me, and risk everything. We both carry ministries against war. As different as they might be, I must believe that one God led us each to our own life’s work. My brother’s calling is a reaction to establish peace, while my heart calls for proactive measures against the conditions for war. We must both risk our entire lives for what we believe. We are the necessary balance of idealism and realism. In this imperfect world, we must steady our aims and breathe fire to ignite whatever future will have us.

Stephen Willis Dotson 2010

Consciousness of the spiritual, of God—whatever that means—is at the heart of who I am. Yet I appear to myself and quite probably to those who know me as an ordinary, daily sort of person, as mundane, as worldly, as anyone else, living a life made up of bills, telephone calls, computers, car-washes, work, food, laundry and so on. Yet my life is aware of a spirit in things. ...

But the sense of a spirit in things is what keeps me alive. I suspect such a recognition is common. I suspect many do not speak of what they deeply recognize as faith. ...

I believe that many lives as ordinary as my own are founded in a sense of the spirit. I believe that faith, consciousness of the unseen Other, works constantly in ordinary lives like mine in a wonderful and mysterious way. Even though no one but the one who knows such faith may feel its power, I believe that in those who are silent faith may be profound and strong, may be the very force which brings about miracles of light.

Phyllis Hoge 2005

1.30 The leading to marry, and the wedding worship itself, were powerful spiritual experiences for me. I stand now in that memory, as I seek to say something useful about the words I use to express my faith. To me, God (whom I most often call Spirit) was the source of the nudge I felt. In following the leading to marry Polly, I believe that I was following Spirit's guidance, which expressed itself within me as a yearning, a growing sense of rightness, and trust. I came to believe that, should Polly and I fall on difficult times in our relationship and our lives, divine assistance (coming through loving friends, worship, prayer, the Quaker clearness and support process) would help us. The Spirit I understood to be leading me into marriage with Polly isn't a white-haired old white man up in the sky. It is, she is, he is, a spirit of love that yearns for us all like a lover, a spirit that yearns for justice, and suffers with us when tragedy and cruelty occur. The God I have glimpsed needs us to be God's hands and feet and voice, needs us to be the face of Love in our families and in the world around us.

Wendy Sanford 2005

All my life I had wanted to live with integrity, that is, to make my personal behavior a reflection of my professed values. But it did not occur to me to seek support for this newfound environmental concern within my Quaker Meeting. Some Friends in my Meeting were practicing a form of simple living, which they linked to the testimonies of Peace and Equality. But no one talked about the Quaker faith itself as a primary source of guidance and inspiration for living more lightly on the planet. ...

This is what had been missing in my earlier frantic environmental activism—an understanding of the spiritual transformation that is essential to curbing our ecologically disruptive behavior.

Louis Cox 2007

About this time an ancient man of good esteem in the neighbourhood came to my house to get his will written. He had young Negroes, and I asking him privately how he purposed to dispose of them, he told me. I then said, 'I cannot write thy will without breaking my own peace,' and respectfully gave him my reasons for it. He signified that he had a choice that I should have wrote it, but as I could not consistent with my conscience, he did not desire it, and so he got it wrote by some other person. A few years later, there being great alteration in his family, he came again to me to get me to write his will. His Negroes were yet young, and his son, to whom he intended to give them, was since he first spoke to me, from a libertine become a sober young man; and he supposed that I would have been free on that account to write it. We had much friendly talk on the subject and then deferred it, and a few days after, he came again and directed their freedom, and so I wrote his will.

John Woolman 1756

Tom Jackson visited Iraq twice in 2000 with Voices in the Wilderness to observe conditions for ordinary Iraqis living under UN sanctions.

Upon my return from Iraq I went back to my job at the high-tech firm, but I found that all I could do was stare at my computer screen. It was very difficult to focus on anything, as I kept remembering the people I met in Iraq, the children lying in hospital beds with no hope of recovery, and knowing that my country's policies were part of the cause of their suffering.

Deep down I realized that God wasn't leading me to continue working at a high-tech firm. God was leading me to become a voice for the voiceless. It is a blessing when a leading is made eminently clear because way opens at every turn. Such was the case in this journey. At the end of July 2000 I left my job and went to Basra to live with a family in the city's poorest neighborhood (Al Jumhuriyah, which means, ironically, 'the revolution') for six weeks. I bought only the equivalent of the meager food rations my Iraqi friends received from the UN, rested in the extreme summer afternoon heat, heard the U.S. and U.K. fighter jets patrolling the sky, and took in the squalor and suffering that was the life of most Iraqis in summer 2000.

In the act of following this leading, I realized that in reaching out to people thought of as 'the enemy,' I found that they were, in fact, not our enemies.

That of God was quite apparent in these kind, welcoming people. It was all the more clear to me that I was led to not only share this witness with Friends and others, but also to speak truth to power on this issue.

Thomas Jackson 2009

1.31

[A] knot of my old acquaintances [at Oxford], espying me, came to me. One of these was a scholar in his gown, another a surgeon of that city ...

When they were come up to me they all saluted me after the usual manner, pulling off their hats and bowing, and saying, 'Your humble servant, sir,' expecting no doubt the like from me. But when they saw me stand still, not moving my cap, nor bowing my knee in way of congee to them, they were amazed, and looked first one upon another, then upon me, and then one upon another again, for a while, without speaking a word.

At length, the surgeon ... clapping his hand in a familiar way upon my shoulder, and smiling on me, said, 'What, Tom! a Quaker?' To which I readily and cheerfully answered, 'Yes, a Quaker.' And as the words passed out of my mouth I felt joy spring in my heart; for I rejoiced that I had not been drawn out by them into a compliance with them, and that I had strength and boldness given me to confess myself to be one of that despised people.

Thomas Ellwood 1659

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WORSHIP

In worship we have our neighbors to right and left, before and behind, yet the Eternal Presence is over all and beneath all. Worship does not consist in achieving a mental state of concentrated isolation from one's fellows. But in the depth of common worship it is as if we found our separate lives were all one life, within whom we live and move and have our being.

Thomas Kelly 1991

Any willing person may come into communion with the Divine without special ritual, at any time, in any place, under any external circumstance. All that is required is desire, humility, and a willingness to wait for the Teacher who is beyond time to come and teach in the present moment. The heart of the life of the Religious Society of Friends is the communal meeting for worship. It is here that we have the opportunity to experience the Sacred Presence in a way that draws us into community and informs our lives, both as individuals and as a religious body. Vital worship depends far more on a deeply felt longing for God than on any particular practice.

Worship in most meetings in New England is unprogrammed; one gathering may be completely silent, while in another, vocal ministry may arise from the silence. Some meetings in New England shape and prepare part of their worship and may employ a pastor to further this experience. Regardless of form, all persons participate actively in the meeting for worship.

Our worship does not always reach the same depth, yet God does break through our worldly preoccupations or lack of preparation. We continue as spiritual seekers to learn together. Our weaknesses and failures should not deter us. When a meeting gathers for worship in active expectancy of God's presence with openness and humility of heart and mind, the power to change lives can arise.

Early Friends discovered that if they gathered for worship "in spirit and in truth" (John 4:24), God's transforming power would be poured out upon them (Joel 2:28-29; Acts 2). They shared George Fox's experience that "there is one, even Christ Jesus, that can speak to thy condition." They testified to their experience that Christ had come to teach His people Himself, and could and did work through anyone without regard to age, gender, social class, literacy, or formal theological training.

Early Friends experienced God's presence as an inward Light that searched their hearts, broke them open, and left them, in Margaret Fell's words, "naked and bare before the Lord God, from whom you cannot hide yourselves." That same Light transformed them into changed people, its power overcoming all that was contrary to itself. These Friends testified that Jesus' promise to plant a new life in the soul and abide there to give it light, to feed it with the bread of life and the living water, and to lead it into all truth was a living reality to be known and experienced by every true believer.

Friends today attempt to yield to that of God within and around us, to reach toward the infinite in whatever way we experience it. In our meetings there are those who know it as Jesus Christ, those who feel the transforming power of the Inner Light, and those for whom it is beyond all names.

It is through the cumulative power of our worship that we most often realize our hopes for a heightened sense of the presence of God, which brings us profound joy. On occasion we experience such a deep oneness in the Eternal Presence that we speak of a “gathered” or “covered” meeting for worship.

If we strive to live in constant awareness of God’s presence and guidance, if we seek unity with the Life that fills all creation, then we will come to meeting for worship prepared. If we make worship, prayer, and openness to God’s leadings a part of our daily lives, then we will come to worship ready to take our part in the ministry, both silent and spoken, and to receive what the meeting offers.

Those gathering for unprogrammed meeting settle into silence as they enter the room. This silence may continue without any spoken words, or someone may feel called by the Spirit to offer ministry. After such ministry, the meeting returns to prayerful silence in which Friends may absorb and reflect on the message. The meeting ends when a designated Friend shakes hands with a neighbor.

Those gathering for programmed meeting may sing; engage in vocal prayer; hear readings from the Bible, Faith and Practice, and other devotional literature; listen to a prepared message; and have a period of open (unprogrammed) worship. Each of these elements is offered as part of the process of centering and gathering together and any of them may be the means by which the heart is opened to the sacred presence. Most programmed meetings employ a pastor who, in consultation with Ministry and Counsel, plays a major role in the structure of the program. The pastor is usually the one offering the prepared message. However, everyone present is expected and encouraged to take an active part in responding to the Spirit.

The sense of a larger presence which we seek in worship is available to all, regardless of age. Children stay through the whole period of worship in some meetings; in others they participate for a short time at either the end or the beginning. Some programmed meetings include a message or story designed for the children. Some meetings hold intergenerational or family worship on a regular or occasional basis. By these arrangements we hope to nurture our children in Quaker worship and to know them as fellow worshippers.

The inner guide of all Friends meetings is the Divine Spirit. We come to meeting with a willingness both to listen deeply to the ministry of others and to offer vocal ministry if urged by this Spirit.

Deep attentive listening is itself ministry. In shared silence we may be as centered and gathered as when vocal ministry has been offered. Whatever the form of our worship, we are all called upon to participate actively and to take responsibility for its quality.

While all Friends are called to listen deeply during worship, some are particularly able to center and ground not only themselves but the meeting as a whole. This spiritual work is done quietly and may appear to go unnoticed, but it is a vital part of deepening the worship experience for all.

Many Friends have developed criteria for knowing when they are called to offer vocal ministry during meeting for worship. The challenge is to discern whether the message is truly from Spirit or arises from their own intellect or emotion. If the message is from Spirit, the next step is to

discern whether it is intended for the meeting as a whole, for another individual at a later time, or for themselves. In the end, faithful ministry requires being neither too bold nor too timid.

Friends' history describes again and again how the spirit of gathered worship propelled Friends to live out their faith in the world.

[Worship] is a preparation for another aspect of life, which lies beyond it. We are organized for action. Our moments of wonder and joy, our experience of invading energy, must not end in emotional thrill; they must be translated into deed and life.

New England Yearly Meeting 1930

In some meetings there are designated people holding the meeting in prayer during worship. They are said to have “care of the meeting.” They settle into worship early, hold the Center consciously during worship, prayerfully anchor those who are ministering vocally, spiritually gather up the whole body of the worshipping community, and discern when it is time to close worship.

ADVICES ON WORSHIP

- 1 Come to meeting for worship with hearts and minds prepared by daily communion with God, ready and willing to be faithful to whatever part the Spirit may call you to take. This may be vocal ministry or prayer, singing, silent worship, or prayerfully upholding the worshipping community. The Spirit may call anyone present to vocal ministry, regardless of training or experience. Be obedient and faithful in using the spiritual gifts given to you.
- 2 Come regularly to meeting for worship even when you are feeling depressed, tired, busy, anxious, angry, or spiritually dry. You are as beloved of God and as valued by your spiritual community when you feel empty as when you feel full. Have the courage to open yourself to what the Spirit may offer.
- 3 When you are preoccupied or distracted in meeting, do not become anxious or agitated, but gently bring your focus back to the Center, over and over again if necessary. If a thought keeps returning, the “distraction” may be a signal for work you need to do.
- 4 When you feel prompted to offer ministry in open worship, wait long enough to feel a sustained quickening of life in you, but do not hold back from fear of your own unworthiness or difficulty in expressing yourself. A few broken phrases centered in the Spirit may be more faithful than an eloquent speech.
- 5 Speak with your own voice, using terms true to your experience. Offer the message you are given in simplicity and sincerity, dispensing with preamble, apology, or justification.
- 6 When offering vocal ministry, speak in a clear voice. Standing may help you focus on the message; it will also help you to be heard.

- 7 When offering sung ministry, engage in the same discernment process as for spoken ministry. Join in such ministry offered by another worshipper only when you feel the Spirit's prompting.
- 8 Remember that each person is a unique individual with a particular background and life experience, and that messages offered in meeting will reflect this variety. Part of worshipping together is listening with an open spirit. A period of silence following each message allows everyone to hold that message and its speaker in love. Hearing truth as others understand it is a way of deepening your own faith.
- 9 Be open to the variety of forms in which Friends worship. Broaden your understanding and appreciation of worship as practiced in the worldwide Quaker family.

QUERIES ON WORSHIP

Although Queries may often be answered with a simple affirmative or negative, it is vital to ask corollary questions, such as "why," "how," or "when." A qualified answer arising from introspection is more meaningful and constructive than an uncritical "yes" or "no."

North Carolina Yearly Meeting (Conservative) 1983

Queries for Individuals

- 1 Do I practice spiritual disciplines during the week to prepare my heart, mind, and spirit for corporate worship?
- 2 Am I faithful and punctual in attendance at meeting for worship?
- 3 What are my particular spiritual gifts and do I exercise them in meeting for worship?
- 4 Has my understanding of worship and its possibilities deepened over time and nurtured my spiritual growth?
- 5 Am I open to spiritual transformation in others and in myself?
- 6 Do I open myself to listen to those whose spiritual experience is expressed in terms different from the ones I understand and am comfortable with?
- 7 What have I discovered in meeting for worship, and does it inform my life?

Queries for the Meeting Community

- 1 What are the signs of vitality and immediacy of the Divine Presence in our meetings for worship?
- 2 What gifts do different Friends bring to worship?
- 3 Do we nurture spiritual gifts and show appreciation when they are exercised?
- 4 Are we aware of those among us who rarely speak in worship, but whose presence grounds

the meeting?

- 5 Are we open to ministry expressed in a variety of religious terms?
- 6 How well and how deeply do we listen to one another?
- 7 Do we recognize ministry as faithful even when it makes us uncomfortable?
- 8 Do we nurture our children in Quaker worship and know them as fellow worshippers?
- 9 Do our corporate and personal worship practices enrich each other?
- 10 Does our worship lead us into faithful action?

EXTRACTS ON WORSHIP

Worship as experienced corporately

As iron sharpeneth iron, the seeing of the faces one of another when both are inwardly gathered into the life, giveth occasion for the life secretly to rise and pass from vessel to vessel. As many candles lighted and put in one place do greatly augment the light and make it more to shine forth, so when many are gathered together into the same life there is more of the glory of God, and His power appears to the refreshment of each individual, for that he partakes not only of the light and life raised in himself but in all the rest.

Robert Barclay 1692

The Kingdom of Heaven did gather us and catch us all, as in a net, and His heavenly power at one time drew many hundreds to land. We came to know a place to stand in and what to wait in; and the Lord appeared daily to us, to our astonishment, amazement and great admiration, insomuch that we often said one unto another, with great joy of heart: ‘What, is the Kingdom of God come to be with men? And will He take up His tabernacle among the sons of men, as He did of old? Shall we, that were reckoned as the outcasts of Israel, have this honour of glory communicated amongst us, which were but men of small parts and of little abilities, in respect of many others, as amongst men?’

Francis Howgill 1672

Retreat

*This silence is an ocean, and we stand
Like doubtful children on its mighty brink.
It's cold to inquiring toes, smooth dark as ink,
Horizon-bare, bounded by no known land. Yet
dare we take our Father by the hand
And wade chin-deep—it's warmer than we think;
Yield wholly to its power—we do not sink,
In liquid arms it lifts us from the strand.
And then with clumsy strokes, we learn to swim
In this new-found, enfolding element,
And when we shoreward turn, the time full spent,
The dust of earth is washed from every limb.*

*So if death be as buoyant, and as sweet,
We shall not fear the abyss beneath our feet.*

Kenneth E. Boulding 1975

Worship as experienced by individuals

On one never-to-be-forgotten Sunday morning, I found myself one of a small company of silent worshippers, who were content to sit down together without words, that each one might feel after and draw near to the Divine Presence, unhindered at least, if not helped, by any human utterance. Utterance I knew was free, should the words be given; and before the meeting was over, a sentence or two were uttered in great simplicity by an old and apparently untaught man, rising in his place amongst the rest of us. I did not pay much attention to the words he spoke, and I have no recollection of their import. My whole soul was filled with the unutterable peace of the undisturbed opportunity for communion with God, with the sense that at last I had found a place where I might, without the faintest suspicion of insincerity, join with others in simply seeking His presence. To sit down in silence could at least pledge me to nothing; it might open to me (as it did that morning) the very gate of heaven.

Caroline Stephen 1890

One day, being under a strong exercise of spirit, I stood up and said some words in a meeting; but not keeping close to the Divine opening, I said more than was required of me. Being soon sensible of my error, I was afflicted in mind some weeks without any light or comfort, even to that degree that I could not take satisfaction in anything. I remembered God, and was troubled, and in the depths of my distress he had pity on me, and sent the Comforter. I then felt forgiveness for my offense; my mind became calm and quiet, and I was truly thankful to my gracious Redeemer for his mercies.

About six weeks after this, feeling the spring of Divine love opened, and a concern to speak, I said a few words in a meeting, in which I found peace. Being thus humbled and disciplined under the cross, my understanding became more strengthened to distinguish the pure spirit which inwardly moves upon the heart, and which taught me to wait in silence sometimes many weeks together, until I felt that rise which prepares the creature to stand like a trumpet, through which the Lord speaks to his flock.

All the faithful are not called to public ministry; but whoever are, are called to minister of that which they have tasted and handled spiritually. The outward modes of worship are various; but whenever any are true ministers of Jesus Christ, it is from the operation of his Spirit upon their hearts, first purifying them, and thus giving them a just sense of the conditions of others. This truth was early fixed in my mind and I was taught to watch the pure opening, and to take heed lest, while I was standing to speak, my own will should get uppermost.

John Woolman 1774

First-Day Thoughts

*In calm and cool and silence, once again
I find my old accustomed place among
My brethren, where, perchance, no human tongue
Shall utter words; where never hymn is sung,*

*Nor deep-toned organ blown, nor censer swung,
 Nor dim light falling through the pictured pane!
 There, syllabled by silence, let me hear
 The still small voice which reached the prophet's ear;
 Read in my heart a still diviner law
 Than Israel's leader on his tablets saw!
 There let me strive with each besetting sin,
 Recall my wandering fancies, and restrain
 The sore disquiet of a restless brain;
 And, as the path of duty is made plain,
 May grace be given that I may walk therein,
 Not like the hireling, for his selfish gain,
 With backward glances and reluctant tread,
 Making a merit of his coward dread,
 But, cheerful, in the light around me thrown,
 Walking as one to pleasant service led;
 Doing God's will as if it were my own,
 Yet trusting not in mine, but in His strength alone!*

John Greenleaf Whittier 1852

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

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

Douglas V. Steere

As I silence myself I become more sensitive to the sounds around me, and I do not block them out. The songs of the birds, the rustle of the wind, children in the playground, the roar of an airplane overhead are all taken into my worship. I regulate my breathing as taught me by my Zen friends, and through this exercise I feel the flow of life within me from my toes right through my whole body. I think of myself like the tree planted by the "rivers of water ..." in Psalm 1, sucking up God's gift of life and being restored. Sometimes I come to meeting for worship tired and weary, and I hear the words of Jesus, "Come unto me, all that labour and are weary, and I will give you rest." And having laid down my burden, I feel refreshed both physically and spiritually. This leads me on to whole-hearted adoration and thanksgiving for all God's blessings. ... My heart overflows with a desire to give Him something in return. I have nothing to give but my own being, and I offer Him my thoughts, words, and actions of each day, and whisper, "Please take me as I am."

Rhythms of worship

2.01

In Friends' meetings also, from the fact that everyone is free to speak, one hears harmonies and correspondences between very various utterances such as are scarcely to be met with elsewhere. It is sometimes as part-singing compared with unison. The free admission of the ministry of women, of course, greatly enriches this harmony. I have often wondered whether some of the motherly counsels I have listened to in our meeting would not reach some hearts that might be closed to the masculine preacher.

Caroline Emelia Stephen 1995

2.02

[Consider] that we Friends are not a family, but a musical band, a symphony orchestra we would like to think, in which all the instruments and voices are important to produce the harmony which allows the central melody to flow, the theme of it all. At times it would be a hushed, quiet performance, pianissimo, at others there are chances for solos, and other times it would be necessary to find those moments which are appropriate to enter and not cause a disturbance, to know how to enter at the exact moment, and we have opportunities to move in crescendo to arrive at a climax with the participation of everyone, and really make other people feel the music.

But there are two essential things in all this: first to study the music and understand what the composer meant, since after all we are only the interpreters, not the authors; and second to always pay attention to Who is conducting. The first Friends never claimed to be the composers, still less the conductors.

Loida E. Fernandez G. 1994

Entering worship

2.03

The first that enters into the place of your meeting ... turn in thy mind to the light, and wait upon God singly, as if none were present but the Lord; and here thou art strong. Then the next that comes in, let them in simplicity of heart sit down and turn in to the same light, and wait in the Spirit; and so all the rest coming in, in the fear of the Lord, sit down in pure stillness and silence of all flesh, and wait in the light. Those who are brought to a pure still waiting upon God in the Spirit are come nearer to the Lord than words are; for God is spirit and in the spirit He is worshipped.

Alexander Parker 1660

In silence which is active, the Inner Light begins to glow—a tiny spark. For the flame to be kindled and to grow, subtle argument and the clamour of our emotions must be stilled. It is by an attention full of love that we enable the Inner Light to blaze and illuminate our dwelling and to make of our whole being a source from which this Light may shine out.

Words must be purified in a redemptive silence if they are to bear the message of peace. The right to speak is a call to the duty of listening. Speech has no meaning unless there are attentive minds and silent hearts. Silence is the welcoming acceptance of the other. The word born of silence must be received in silence.

Pierre Lacout 1993

The spirit of worship

And it's especially to be observed that in the whole New Testament there is no order nor command given in this thing but to follow the revelations of the Spirit, save only that general, of meeting together: a thing dearly owned and diligently practised by us ...

Robert Barclay 1692

And this is the manner of their worship. They are to wait upon the Lord, to meet in the silence of the flesh, and to watch for the stirring of his life, and the breakings forth of his power amongst them. And in the breakings forth of that power they may pray, speak, exhort, rebuke, sing, or mourn, and so on, according as the spirit teaches, requires, and gives utterance.

2.04

Isaac Penington 1681

Worship is what happens naturally when a created being is in the presence of its creator. It involves intimacy and it involves communication of truth. Worship can be solitary or gathered in a group. For two hundred years Quakers worshipped in expectant silence without music and with only occasional messages brought up from the silence by different members. Now Friends all over the world have many ways of worshipping. Music and even dance happens in worship. Pastors bring messages. But the common thread should be that worship is an activity and a time when the human and the Divine sit together and focus on their relationship.

Freedom Friends Church (Salem, OR) 2009

Every person, male or female, is assumed, in this bold experiment, to possess spiritual capacity and, since God is Spirit, can come without mediation into direct living relation with Him. There are no "favorites," no persons who have exclusive privileges and so can do the "sacred things" for others. Every person must be religious for himself or he will never have any of the fruits of religion. Life is essentially sacramental and many of the common things of daily life bring us to the consciousness of the real presence, so that, here again, there is felt to be no need for special sacrament or for a privileged mediator. Ministry is a very varied service ... There are many types, many forms, many degrees of it. But like life itself, spiritual value will be determined largely by personal faith, qualities of character, dedication of spirit, sensitiveness to guidance and willingness to pay the cost of excellence.

2.05

This venture of faith in the experiment of lay-religion is one of the most original, one of the boldest and one of the most crucial attempts that Quakerism has made.

Rufus M. Jones 1936

Here indeed is a service of worship that demands that every believer be his own priest. For in the Quaker meeting for worship, the member must still his body, still his mind, must attend to the presence of God, must thank and adore him for being what he is, must feel the incongruities in his own life that are out of keeping with such a presence, must long for their removal and for forgiveness, must be inwardly absolved, must become conscious of persons and situations in special need and draw them into this presence, must wait in utter stillness before God, and if some even deeper insight into his own condition should be discovered by him by any vocal

ministry that may occur in the meeting, or by the unhurried stay in the presence of the Divine Listener, he must be ready to yield to what is required of him.

Douglas V. Steere 1955

In a truly covered meeting an individual who speaks takes no credit to himself for the part he played in the unfolding of the worship... . For the feeling of being a pliant instrument of the Divine Will characterizes true speaking “in the Life.” Under such a covering an individual emerges into vocal utterance, frequently without fear and trembling, and subsides without self-consciousness into silence when his part is played. For One who is greater than all individuals has become the meeting place of the group, and He becomes the leader and director of worship. With wonder one hears the next speaker, if there be more, take up another aspect of the theme of the meeting. No jealousy, no regrets that he didn’t think of saying that, but only gratitude that the angel has come and troubled the waters and that many are finding healing through the one Life. A gathered meeting is no place for the enhancement of private reputations, but for self-effacing pliancy and obedience to the whispers of the Leader.

Thomas Kelly 1996

There are times of dryness in our individual lives, when meeting may seem difficult or even worthless. At such times one may be tempted not to go to meeting, but it may be better to go, prepared to offer as our contribution to the worship simply a sense of need. In such a meeting one may not at the time realise what one has gained, but one will nevertheless come away helped.

Berks & Oxon Quarterly Meeting Ministry & Extension Committee 1948

2.06

Thanksgiving, confession, calming of fears, forgiveness, reproof, chastisement, awareness of our many blessings, instruction, exhortation, support, comfort, challenge, and openness to joy and truth are some aspects of worship we may meet.

But there will be times for all of us when worship will not offer us comfort, uplift our spirits, or speak to our condition. At times we may feel distant from God and our fellow-worshippers; faith and perseverance are necessary to bring us through these dry spells. At other times the spoken ministry may be pointed, prophetic, or disturbing. Worship offers us the experience of the power of the Spirit, but that power is not tame, and our lessons from meeting are not always those we expect.

New York Yearly Meeting 2001

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3 CORPORATE DISCERNMENT IN MEETINGS FOR BUSINESS

Inward yielding and waiting for a sense of unity to grow among all present are characteristics of the way Friends conduct their business. The spiritual disciplines of corporate discernment are grounded in the faith that we can perceive and affirm God's guidance for the gathered community. Our experience of worship undergirds our understanding of reaching unity in the Spirit, a sense of the meeting that sometimes comes as an unexpected blessing when we have labored hard to discern our way. As we listen to each other and seek together for Divine guidance, we can affirm the unity that enables us to respond faithfully.

Our business meetings begin and end with worship, framing the work at hand with centered awareness in the divine presence. Although the business to be addressed requires attention to facts, details, and varying options, we seek to remain spiritually grounded throughout the discernment process. Our decisions do not rely on majority rule, but rather on a unity found through calm attention to the Light Within. The Spirit may speak through anyone present, and it is our task to listen and speak with humility and to trust in the Spirit's guidance.

The heart of Friends' business process is the nurturing of spiritual openness and deep listening that allows the sense of the meeting to emerge. At times, there may be unanimous agreement that a proposed action should be carried out. However, when those gathered are not in simple agreement, careful consideration will be given to each speaker, and silent worship may be requested. If all in attendance draw on their disciplines of worship and stay mindful that the purpose is to seek the will of God for the gathered body, unity can be found and acted upon. Sense of the meeting is the understanding of where the gathered body is led and does not mean that every individual present is completely satisfied or in total agreement. Contrasting views and perceptions may be expressed and some disagreements may remain. The sense of the meeting emerges from the committed efforts of a loving community and strengthens its bonds.

THE MEETING FOR BUSINESS

Prior to the meeting for business, the clerk prepares the agenda, with input from the appropriate committees and individuals. Notice of complicated or controversial issues should be given to members in advance to allow Friends to come more fully informed and inwardly prepared for the discipline of the meeting. Those reporting to the meeting for business should provide written materials as needed to facilitate the knowledgeable conduct of business. In most meetings, the clerk and recording clerk will sit at a table facing the group and the meeting will begin with a period of worship. In some meetings, a few Friends are appointed to hold the meeting in prayer throughout.

The clerk sets the pace of the meeting, as Friends who signal their desire to speak wait to be recognized. Allowing time to reflect between each contribution and addressing the clerk rather than the previous speaker help maintain an atmosphere of prayerful corporate seeking. Part of the discipline of the process is to refrain from stating concerns or ideas that have already been

expressed. While it may be helpful to the clerk to say, “That Friend speaks my mind” when we agree with a previous speaker, care should be taken that this does not become a veiled means of voting.

Sometimes it is the task of a committee to present the necessary background information and bring suggestions for possible courses of action. With a difficult issue, a preliminary threshing session may be arranged to allow members an opportunity to express their views and listen to others without the expectation that a decision will be reached at that time. A threshing session is a time of worshipful listening that allows Friends to gather information; to express their thoughts, questions, and concerns; and to hear one another. Detailed minutes of comments and discussion will be helpful, especially to those unable to attend.

Working through the agenda, the clerk or recording clerk will attempt to articulate the sense of the meeting by proposing a minute. Once the sense of the meeting has been reached, it should be promptly recorded as a minute and read back to the meeting for its approval. The clerk and recording clerk may need time to compose a minute together and will ask the body to uphold them as they do so. Any member may offer a substitute for the proposed minute, and the meeting may approve, modify, or reject it, in exactly the same manner as a minute proposed by the clerk. Friends have not completed their action until they have approved the minute, and no body of Friends will be better prepared to give or withhold its approval than the one that has just reached unity. Since the group is seeking divine guidance together as a faith community, only those present can experience the movement of the Spirit within the group. In some meetings it is accepted practice for a Friend unable to attend the business meeting to give the clerk a written statement of his or her thoughts beforehand, understanding that those present will hold this concern in the Light as they move toward unity.

Often all minutes will be approved at the same meeting for business, although some meetings only read back and approve minutes on complex or sensitive matters. The reading back of the minute tests that the minute captures the unity which has been found. If all are clear, Friends approve the minute, thus completing their action on this item of business. In some cases, when Friends are not clear, the sense of the meeting can best be expressed in a minute of exercise, which states the various perceptions in the meeting on a given matter. This is a helpful tool in recognizing where the meeting is on a given concern.

At times, individuals may feel uncomfortable with an action the rest of the body appears ready to approve. It is important that these concerns are heard and carefully considered. Expediency, time constraints, and impatience to move on are frequent stumbling blocks to deep and careful discernment of God’s will. The clerk may find it useful to call Friends into silent worship to calm heightened emotions and seek divine guidance for a way forward. Faithfulness to the truth given, no matter how inconvenient or incomplete, is essential for the spiritual health of the meeting.

It is the clerk’s task to support the body in discerning where it is being led and whether additional time is needed to clarify the group’s understanding of divine guidance. Passionate devotion to a cause can lead Friends to speak from their own desires rather than from a deeper place of shared spiritual discernment. It is a tender and difficult balance to listen with love to all concerns, while recognizing that the body may be led in a direction with which some individuals are not comfortable. Friends who have strong reservations about the action the group seems

ready to take should examine their motivations to determine if the Spirit is calling on them to speak, or if stubbornness or personal preference is motivating their discomfort.

Sometimes after this examination and patient listening to the meeting, a Friend may express misgivings about an action the body seems ready to approve. The clerk must be open both to the meeting's readiness to act and to any Friend's sense of discomfort with that action. The group may need to remain undecided for a while longer, holding the possibility that a previously unrealized way may open. It is also possible that the Friend will express willingness to "stand aside" from the proposed action, recognizing that the meeting has reached unity. The act of "standing aside" is an expression of community with the meeting as it seeks God's will in the matter. It is an acknowledgement that the action being taken is how the meeting is led at this time. What we seek is not unanimity, but unity in the Spirit, which is able to encompass discomfort with the approved action. The clerk may then propose a minute expressing the sense of the meeting. Once a concern is heard, it is no longer carried only by the individual who raised it. It now rests in the community and the name of an individual standing aside is not recorded. The concern may be recorded in the minutes and is part of the sense of the meeting.

On rare occasions, after spiritual searching to ascertain that personal feelings are not blocking divine guidance, a Friend may be unable either to unite with or to stand aside from the decision the body is ready to make. The person with the conviction presents his or her concerns, gives the reasons, and asks the group not to proceed. The meeting must discern whether the objection has enough spiritual weight to require waiting for further light. The phrase "standing in the way" has been used to describe this request not to proceed, but an individual never has the power to prevent the meeting from acting. A concern, however, may have enough weight to cause the meeting either to hold the matter over for further discernment or to abandon the action entirely.

It is important that all members of the meeting proceed with the understanding that everyone is acting with sincerity and based on their understanding of the leadings of the spirit. An inability to find a common understanding of God's will can create a rift in the meeting community. In such cases, all members of the meeting must work to repair the wounds of this break—reaching out to others in love, seeking to rebuild trust one with another.

If the meeting decides to proceed when one or more Friends are unable to stand aside, the resulting minute will be very similar to a minute written when someone does stand aside, except for recording that a Friend(s) is unable to unite. Again, names are not recorded. In this case particularly, the meeting should humbly consider the possibility that minuting a careful and detailed record of the concern might be of use to the meeting in the future.

Corporate discernment requires practice and the discipline and faith of all Friends present. We must take care to build a loving community, with trust among members and trust in the spirit-led process to which we commit ourselves. We labor together in love and humility, with openness to divine guidance, seeking the will of God.

ADVICES ON CORPORATE DISCERNMENT

1 *Being orderly come together [you are] not to spend time with needless, unnecessary and fruitless discourses; but to proceed in the wisdom of God, not in the way of the world, as a worldly assembly of men, by hot contests, by seeking to outspoke and overreach one another in discourse as if it were controversy between party and party of men, or two sides violently striving for dominion, not deciding affairs by the greater vote. But in the wisdom, love and fellowship of God, in gravity, patience, meekness, in unity and concord, submitting one to another in lowliness of heart, and in the holy Spirit of truth and righteousness, all things [are] to be carried on; by hearing, and determining every matter coming before you in love, coolness, gentleness and dear unity.*

Edward Burrough 1662

- 2 Remember that we are only able to act according to our present sense and judgment, in the faith that the light we are given is enough for our needs today. Let us be humble both with one another and in anticipating that there may be more and different steps to take tomorrow.
- 3 Think it possible that you may be mistaken.
- 4 In searching together for the will of God in matters before the meeting, Friends are seeking the truth, so that all may join in its affirmation. We are not engaging in debate, or trying to win an argument. Know that working together as a community of spiritual seeking is often more important than simply getting things done.
- 5 On entering the meeting, avoid falling into conversation. Take your seat quietly, entering into a receptive silence. As the meeting moves forward, listen carefully to what others say, that you do not burden the meeting by repetition. Allow time for quiet reflection after each speaker so that their words may sink in and receive due consideration. Should you disagree with what has been said, show respect for those who have spoken by offering another viewpoint in a humble spirit.
- 6 Address the clerk rather than another individual and speak only to the matter under consideration. Do not attempt to speak for Friends who are absent as they are not present to sense the movement of the Spirit in the gathered group.
- 7 Hold the clerks and the whole group in prayer, especially when difficult matters are being considered.

Advices for Clerks

- 1 Prepare an agenda in advance to balance the flow of business in a thoughtful way, listing committees which are to report and actions or concerns calling for discernment.
- 2 Remember to keep in mind the relationship of each agenda item to the larger life of the meeting.

- 3 Announce difficult matters in time to allow Friends to come prepared.
- 4 Open the meeting with worship.
- 5 Recall that your role is as servant to the meeting rather than participant in discussion. Employ listening more than speaking.
- 6 Remind Friends to address the clerk when speaking, rather than responding directly to other speakers.
- 7 Remember that worship during the meeting can keep Friends gathered in the Spirit.
- 8 Allow time as needed between agenda items for the recording clerk to compose minutes.
- 9 Some Friends speak easily and often. Take care they do not prevent quieter, more hesitant Friends from participating.
- 10 Conclude with worship.

Advices for Recording Clerks

- 1 Pre-write standard minutes (opening and closing, committee reports, outstanding business, etc.) but remain open to the possibility that the Spirit will lead the meeting elsewhere.
- 2 Expect to compose substantive minutes to be read back to the meeting for approval at the time.
- 3 You may ask the clerk and the gathered body to hold you in prayer when working on a difficult minute; remember it is the meeting's minute, not your own.
- 4 Primarily minute actions and decisions. At times, additional context may be provided for clarity. "Less is more" is a good rule.
- 5 Minutes should reflect the sense of the meeting rather than a list of individual comments or perspectives.
- 6 If no decision is reached, a minute of exercise can capture where the meeting is in its discernment at that moment in time.
- 7 Names are not recorded unless the action pertains directly to specific person(s): marriage, traveling minutes, memorials, membership, etc.

QUERIES ON CORPORATE DISCERNMENT

Although Queries may often be answered with a simple affirmative or negative, it is vital to ask corollary questions such as "why," "how," or "when." A qualified answer arising from introspection is more meaningful and constructive than an uncritical "yes" or "no."

North Carolina Yearly Meeting (Conservative) 1983, p.33

- 1 Do you seek the leadings of the Light in meeting for business as you do in worship?

2 How do you prepare your heart and mind for meeting for business?

- 3 Do you come prepared for the business at hand, having read relevant material or with committee reports ready for distribution?
- 4 Do you make an effort to maintain your awareness that God is with us as we work?
- 5 Do you proceed in a peaceable spirit with forbearance and warm affection for each other?
- 6 Do you trust that the Spirit has guided those involved with the process which has brought the group to its current place and do you respect the decisions that have already been made?
- 7 Do you attend to the clerk, speaking only when acknowledged and refraining from conversations back and forth across the room?
- 8 As a member of a spiritual community, do you acknowledge differences and seek to settle conflicts promptly in a manner free from resentment and all forms of inward violence?
- 9 Do you take care to consider, in a patient, loving and prayerful spirit, the perspective of those with whom you disagree?
- 10 Have you considered whether God's will for you as an individual may differ from God's will for the meeting?
- 11 When a decision is being reached with which you disagree, are you faithful to your responsibility to speak if led?
- 12 When the meeting comes to a decision, do you accept it as "our" decision rather than "theirs"?
- 13 Are we willing to recognize when we are in a place where we should not act, but rather to wait patiently for further guidance to come?

EXTRACTS ON CORPORATE DISCERNMENT

Central to Quaker process is the understanding that our task is not so much to figure out what to do as to understand what the Spirit is asking of us as a corporate body. When we come to business meeting, committee meetings, or smaller meetings of individuals with this perspective, the focus shifts away from outcomes and towards community. Our task is to seek together, the same way we seek in meeting for worship, the experience of God in our midst.

Westport Monthly Meeting 2006

George Fox wrote this Epistle to the Six Weeks Meeting in London, which was a group of Friends from different London meetings who were particularly concerned with financial affairs.

The Six Weeks Meeting is for to see that all their meetings are preserved by the wisdom of God in the unity of the spirit, the bond of peace, and in the fellowship of the holy ghost . . . And that all may be careful to speak short and pertinent to matters in a Christian spirit, and dispatch

business quickly, and keep out of long debate and heats; and with the spirit of God keep that down, which is doting about questions and strife of words, that tend to parties and contention: which in the church of God there is no such custom to be allowed. And likewise not to speak more than one at a time; nor any in a fierce way; for that is not to be allowed in any society, neither natural nor spiritual; but as the apostle saith, “Be swift to hear, and slow to speak;” and let it be in the grace, which seasons all words ...

George Fox 1690

“Consensus” is a word sometimes used to describe a Quaker-like process. Yet Quakers would insist that this is not the most suitable term. Consensus (or unanimous consent, or general agreement) is based on the work of human wisdom and reason, whereas “the Sense of the Meeting” is based on the prompting of the Spirit. Consensus is commonly understood to require mutual compromise—shaving away at positions until we find a core which is objectionable to none. The Quaker approach tries instead to reach toward a higher and greater Truth that speaks to all concerns in ways that could not have been foreseen. We discover what God wants for us, as opposed to what we thought we wanted. “Consensus is the product of an intellectual process. Sense of the Meeting is a commitment of faith...” .

Most Friends are painfully aware of how our humanness falls short of the spiritual ideal, and of how fragile our process can seem. Corporate discernment of the will of God is a risky and imperfect proposition. In relying so extensively on the Holy Spirit, we make ourselves vulnerable to pitfalls and failures. However, far from being a weakness, such vulnerability is central to our understanding of the power of worship (and business) “in spirit and in truth.” To fall into the hands of the living God requires leaping, laying ourselves open to risk. Our commitment to this process, and our assurance of its outcomes, can only be proven [at the end of time], but still we give testimony to the truth we have been given, and are able to say that we have tested this method and found that it does indeed bring us into Unity with the will of God.

Eden Grace 2000

The danger in Society doth not lie so much in that some few may have a differing apprehension in some things from the general sense, as it doth in this, namely, when such that do so differ so suffer themselves to be led out of the bond of charity, and shall labour to impose their private sense upon the rest of their brethren, and to be offended and angry if it be not received. This is the seed of sedition and strife, that hath grown up in too many to their hurt.

Stephen Crisp 1694

In 1757, John Woolman attended Virginia Yearly Meeting. A committee of that Yearly Meeting had examined the Pennsylvania queries and brought them forward for consideration with some alterations. One change troubled him. A Pennsylvania query, “Are there any concerned in the importation of negroes, or in buying them after imported?” had been revised to “Are there any concerned in the importation of Negroes or buying them to trade in?” Woolman had been pleased that the Pennsylvania queries found both importing slaves and buying any to be unacceptable. He was troubled at Virginia’s change, which implied that while importing slaves was unacceptable, buying them was acceptable as long as they were not bought for resale. Woolman expressed his unease with the alteration.

Friends appeared attentive to what was said; some expressed a care and concern about their Negroes; none made any objection by way of reply to what I said. But the query was admitted as they had altered it.

As some of their members have heretofore traded in Negroes as in other merchandise, this query being admitted will be one step further than they have hitherto gone, and I did not see it my duty to press for an alteration, but felt easy to leave it all to him who alone is able to turn the hearts of the mighty and make way for the spreading of Truth in the earth by means agreeable to his infinite wisdom.

John Woolman 1774

[It is] our concern that Friends should work with one another in a humble and loving spirit, each giving to others credit for purity of motive, notwithstanding differences of opinion, and being ready to accept the decision of the meeting even when it may not accord with his [or her] own judgment. The mutual forbearance and understanding which are produced by a constant dwelling under the power and control of Christ do much to prevent jealousies, misunderstandings, or any breach of love.

London Yearly Meeting 1931

In Mount Toby (MA) Meeting, the clerk poses a question after the opening worship of meeting for business. A period of worship-sharing follows and the recording clerk crafts a minute expressing a corporate response.

The clerk invites Friends to reflect on the questions, “In Friends’ decision making, what is unity? What is my role and responsibility in reaching unity?”

Friends express the importance of being patient, being willing to hear each other fully and openly. When we take into account our knowledge of one another in community, when we ask ourselves to listen deeply, to release our own individual opinion and surrender our individual will, we find profound connection with others and with the divine. We are all separate ingredients in a pot, each carrying our individual flavors, but simmering together until we create a flavorful soup. This unified creation can be a difficult but amazing process. It brings us closer to one another and to God.

Mt. Toby Monthly Meeting 2008

Bill Taber, earlier in the excerpted article, describes the Mind of Christ as that state of consciousness where we feel we are “dwelling timelessly in the light ... At this point there may be no words, only a sense of unity, unity, unity.”

Spiritual discernment seems to flourish best from this contemplative, reflective, nonlinear state of mind, which is a wide, non-judgmental, almost non-attached but very alert attentiveness. Being in the Mind of Christ, however, does not mean being “spaced out,” for the analytic faculties are not suppressed; they are cushioned by a more vast mind which takes all things into account. Indeed, our analytical faculties are at least as sharp, if not sharper, in the Mind of Christ than they are at other times; the difference is that here we know that we are not just our surface mind, as we Westerners tend to assume, and the difference is that this surface mind is no longer the master, but the tool, of the more integrated person we become in the Mind of Christ.

Bill Taber 1985

The sense of the meeting is not unanimity—everyone present need not agree with the action being taken. I have had the experience of concurring in a sense of meeting with which I dis-

agreed, knowing it was the sense of the meeting. I have wept, wishing the meeting could go further than it was ready to go, but clearly it was not ready to do so.

When I am disappointed with a sense of the meeting, I try not to give much attention to why we didn't do more, but to focus on openness to the next step, based on the experience that will follow carrying out the clarity we did reach. I also try and listen to the love within me that accepts people in my faith community for what they are, and pray that God will use and transform us all. Let me also say how much I appreciate the further light we get from each other along the way from monthly meetings to quarterly meetings to Yearly Meeting—we learn and are challenged by concerns beyond our local community of faith.

As I see it, there is only one necessary query: Is the Spirit present? Is new experience teaching me that it is present in places I have previously thought it couldn't be? If so, maybe I need to change.

Jan Hoffman 1988

After due consideration has been given to all points of view expressed in the meeting, it is the duty of the clerk to weigh carefully the various expressions and to state what he or she believes to be the sense of the meeting, not alone according to numbers but also according to the recognized experience and spiritual insight of the members. This matter of weighing the individual utterances in arriving at the sense of the meeting is quite fundamental to the Quaker method. Several Friends may quite sincerely speak in one direction, and then one Friend may express an insight which carries weight and conviction in the meeting in a different sense. This one acceptable communication may outweigh in significance several more superficial ones.

George A. Selleck 1986

We reminded ourselves of the traditional practice of minutes of exercise—which we also called “process minutes”—to affirm where the meeting is at a given moment when there is as yet no clarity to act. These minutes simply state the various perceptions in the meeting on a given matter at that moment, and can be helpful in building a sense of the meeting. Often if we can clearly affirm where we are, it frees us to perceive new light. We heard that reading such minutes in North Carolina Yearly Meeting (Conservative) gives a clear sense of the steps in growth toward unity in opposition to slavery.

We contrasted these minutes of exercise with minutes which polarize. If a minute is proposed to the meeting by a committee with the implication that the acceptance of the minute is the goal, then Friends are seen as either “for” or “against” the minute.

This polarization does not contribute to the sense of unity in seeking God's will which is essential to our business process. A minute of exercise might state the proposed minute, but then describe fully the range of responses to it in neutral terms, waiting for the Spirit of God to open a way forward from there. We need to remember that we are always resting in the unity of God and are held there despite our differences on a given question.

Friends Consultation on Worship 1989

An ad hoc Web Committee brought a minute on electronic decision-making to the New England Yearly Meeting Permanent Board concluding with a paragraph “urging Friends to consider decisions reached via electronic communication to be provisional until the body

has gathered and affirmed their decision.” Here is a minute of exercise on the matter.

3.01

While we affirm the essential value of face-to-face meetings in discerning God’s will in Quaker business, and hold serious reservations about the use of electronic decision-making as a routine practice, we were unable to reach unity on a proscriptive policy at this time, as Friends continue to wrestle with the use and misuse of new technologies.

We are called to be agents of the spirit and should aspire to allow the spirit its fullest functioning. Toward that end we desire to achieve unity. Finding the tools that work best in achieving unity should be our concern. We are at a point of evolving clarity and are not ready to accept absolute statements. This is a creative time of exploring how our core faith and our evolving experience of technology come together in a place of greatest integrity.

New England Yearly Meeting Permanent Board 2004

3.02

As we close these sessions I would like to reflect a minute on what took place here all week and especially last night. What we said was that we did not find unity, which is not exactly right. We did not find clarity to change our policy on tax withholding. But there was a deep unity, which I suspect had something to do with the spiritual faithfulness of many Friends... . Those who had come into the meeting sure that they could not support the proposal found a willingness to stand aside. And then, instead of accepting that gracious offer, those who had come in fervently hoping we could move forward were led to let go of that, unwilling to move while any were reluctant, willing to wait [for] God’s guidance and God’s timing.

New England Yearly Meeting of Friends 1992

Words in bold are advices articulated by Michael Birkel in his article “Some Advice from John Woolman on Meeting for Business” in the January 1995 issue of Friends Journal. The text in bold is copyrighted by Friends Publishing Corporation and has been reprinted with permission. To subscribe: www.friendsjournal.org.

For some of the advices, Michael included actual quotations from Woolman. The Faith and Practice Revision Committee has added quotations for advices where he did not do so. All quotations are from The Journal and Major Essays of John Woolman, 1971 (edited by J. Moulton).

3.03

Know where of you speak, and speak from the center rather than from preconceived notions.

I had occasion to consider that it is a weighty thing to speak much in large meetings for business. First, except our minds are rightly prepared and we clearly understand the case we speak to, instead of forwarding, we hinder business and make more labor for those on whom the burden of the work is laid (p. 95).

Speak with economy, attending more to the matter at hand than to yourself as speaker.

If selfish views or a partial spirit have any room in our minds, we are unfit for the Lord's work. If we have a clear prospect of the business and proper weight on our minds to speak, it behooves us to avoid useless apologies and repetitions (p. 95).

Imagine how it feels to others.

Where people are gathered from afar, and adjourning a meeting of business attended with great difficulty, it behooves us all to be cautious how they detain a meeting, especially when they have sat six or seven hours and a good way to ride home. In three hundred minutes are five hours, and he that improperly detains three hundred people one minute, besides other evils that attend it, does an injury like that of imprisoning one man five hours without cause (p. 95).

Don't pretend the conflict isn't there.

To see the failings of our friends, and think hard of them, without opening that which we ought to open, and still carry the face of friendship—this tends to undermine the foundation of true unity (p. 112).

Value real community.

[T]hrough the strength of that love which is stronger than death, tenderness of heart was often felt amongst us (p. 102).

Keep your eye single to righteousness, not self-image or self-righteousness.

3.04 I heard that the case was coming to our Yearly Meeting, which brought a weighty exercise upon me, and under a sense of my own infirmities and the great danger I felt of turning aside from perfect purity, my mind was often drawn to retire alone and put up my prayers to the Lord that he would be graciously pleased to strengthen me, that setting aside all views of self-interest and the friendship of this world, I might stand fully resigned to his holy will (pp. 91–92).

Strive to reach the pure witness in others.

And though we meet with opposition from another spirit, yet as there is a dwelling in meekness, feeling our spirits subject and moving only in the gentle, peaceable wisdom, the inward reward of quietness will be greater than our difficulties. Where the pure life is kept to and meetings of discipline are held in the authority of it, we find by experience that they are comfortable and tend to the health of the body (p. 68).

Humility and charity work best.

3.05 If such who were at times under sufferings on account of some scruples of conscience kept low and humble and in their conduct manifested a spirit of true charity, it would be more likely to reach the witness in others, and be of more service in the church, than if their sufferings were attended with a contrary spirit and conduct (p. 98).

Righteousness and love are inseparable.

And in the heat of zeal, I once made reply to what an ancient Friend said, which when I sat down I saw that my words were not enough seasoned with charity, and after this I spake no more on the subject. ...

And then after some close exercise and hearty repentance for that I had not attended closely to the safe guide, I stood up, and, reciting the passage, acquainted Friends that though I dare not go from what I had said as to the matter, yet I was uneasy with the manner of my speaking, as believing milder language would have been better (pp. 110–111).

3.06

3.07

3.08

3.09

3.10

3.11

3.13

ADVICES FROM JOHN WOOLMAN

9 A BRIEF HISTORY OF FRIENDS IN NEW ENGLAND

THE EARLY YEARS

Dissenters Among New England Settlers

The first New England Quakers were New Englanders before they became Quakers. Most of them, or their parents, arrived from England in the great Puritan migration of the 1630s. Some sought new opportunities for profit and prosperity. Most had sufficient means to establish successful farms or mercantile ventures. Some came primarily for religious reasons, seeking relief from the strictness of the Church of England.

But the political and religious leaders in Plymouth and Massachusetts Bay left little space for dissenting opinions. A number of settlers, including many who would later become Quaker, found themselves at odds with the authorities. By 1640 Massachusetts Bay authorities had expelled a number of dissidents, including Roger Williams and Anne Hutchinson. Both leaders settled in Rhode Island with some of their followers, helping set a tone of religious toleration there.

These banishments did not eliminate dissent. By the early 1650s, court records in communities north and south of Boston showed a number of residents fined for not attending church services, holding unauthorized worship in homes, and refusing to pay the tax to support the town minister.

The Publishers of Truth in England

Into this ferment came a handful of evangelists from a new movement in England. They called themselves “Children of the Light,” “Publishers of Truth,” or “the people of God.” They also called one other “Friends,” both personally and generally, decades later coming to name themselves the Religious Society of Friends. Their enemies called them “Quakers” because they claimed to tremble before God. They preached that each person could know, directly and immediately, the power of Christ’s love and the light of his Truth, and could receive the power to conform their lives to the rigorous demands of that Light.

One leader in this new movement, George Fox, had searched without success for a priest or preacher who could satisfy his spiritual hunger. In 1647 he wrote, “I heard a voice which said, ‘There is one, even Christ Jesus, that can speak to thy condition,’ and when I heard it my heart did leap for joy.” He began an itinerant ministry, proclaiming from hilltops and in churches and market squares that “Christ has come to teach his people himself.” From the top of Pendle Hill in Lancashire Fox had a vision of “a great people to be gathered.”

The charismatic preaching of Fox and other members of the “Valiant Sixty,” as the core leaders of this nascent movement were called, attracted thousands of seekers, especially in the north of England. These communities found that if they gathered for worship “in spirit and truth” (John 4:24), God’s transforming power would be poured out upon them (Joel 2:28–29; Acts 2). They

experienced God's presence, sometimes called the Light, as a power that searched their hearts, broke them open, and left them, in Margaret Fell's words, "naked and bare before the Lord God, from whom you cannot hide yourselves." That same Light transformed them, its power overcoming all that was contrary to itself. It knit them into one body; as Francis Howgill put it, "The Kingdom of Heaven did gather us and catch us all, as in a net."

Quakers taught that this direct experience of grace was potentially available to everyone. That universalism distinguished them from many other Protestants, who taught that only some people could be saved. Quakers also witnessed to their experience that God could choose and use anyone as a messenger, including servants, uneducated laborers, and women.

The primary qualification for becoming a minister was faithfulness to God's direction. Formal theological training and institutional credentialing were unnecessary, and might even hinder the fresh proclamation of a living gospel.

These Publishers of Truth preached a prophetic message. Like the Hebrew prophets and Christian apostles, they experienced God as a living, energizing power, spurring them to confront what they saw as the hypocrisy and corruption of social and ecclesiastical institutions and to form communities of believers committed to doing God's will. They encouraged mutual aid, particularly to those who suffered persecution for their faithfulness.

They saw their movement as "primitive Christianity revived," and looked to the early Christian Church as their model for dynamic organization and loving community. The Bible shaped and guided every decision, though Friends viewed it as a record of God's action in the human community, not as the Word of God. The true Word of God was the living Christ, alive and active to the present day in the human heart (John 1:1–5).

As other Protestant churches battled over the proper practice and theology of the sacraments, Friends rejected the outward sacraments entirely as neither Biblically mandated, nor necessary, nor sufficient for salvation. They emphasized, from their own lived experience, Christ's promise to plant a new life in the soul and abide there to give it light, to feed it with the bread of life and the Living Water, and to lead it into all truth. They proclaimed their experience of a true baptism of Christ Himself, who baptizes His people with the Holy Spirit (Matt. 3:11; Acts 2:4), and a true communion in the spiritual experience of the soul united with God in a gathered community.

Friends expected inward transformation or conviction to show itself in a life of holiness or moral perfection. Their understanding of perfection quickly took specific forms, which would come to characterize Quakers as a sect. Their experience showed them that God works within persons of every class. Addressing upper-class individuals by the plural "you" suggested higher social class and denoted higher worth, so Friends insisted on using the singular "thee" and "thou" to everyone, and refused to bow or remove their hats before judges and other upper-class individuals. Swearing oaths implied a double standard of truth and violated Christ's express commandment not to swear, so Friends refused all oaths, resulting in thousands of fines, imprisonments, and seizures of goods. They believed the state-supported church was corrupt, so they refused to attend it or to pay the tithes that supported it, resulting in more seizures.

Although formal membership records would not be kept for some decades, Margaret Fell and her daughters at their Swarthmoor Hall home in Lancashire kept track of those in prison or otherwise suffering for their testimony to Truth, and coordinated both material relief and lobbying efforts to secure their release. Although the movement attracted seekers from the Puritan army, many Friends became convinced that their Divine Guide would never order them to fight with outward weapons, even on behalf of a nominally Christian government.

These “Publishers of Truth” felt called to spread their message widely. “Let all nations hear the word,” Fox exhorted. “Spare no place, spare not tongue nor pen; but be obedient to the Lord God ... and be valiant for the Truth upon earth.” The movement spread quickly from the northern counties to London and the south, west into Ireland, and into Holland, Germany, and France.

QUAKER BEGINNINGS IN NEW ENGLAND, 1656–1676

In 1656 Ann Austin, a middle-aged matron, and Mary Fisher, a young servant-girl, left the north of England to carry the gospel to the English colonies. When they arrived in Boston, they were arrested and strip-searched for marks of witchcraft. After five weeks in jail, they were shipped back to Barbados. The next summer, in 1657, a group of English Quakers crossed the Atlantic in the *Woodhouse*, a small leaky ship guided, its skipper reported, only by “the Lord leading our vessel even as it were a man leading a horse by the head.” They landed on Long Island, and some of them headed east to Rhode Island.

These evangelists found fertile ground in clusters of dissenters and seekers in Salem, Sandwich, and Pembroke, Massachusetts, and on Aquidneck (Rhode) Island, where Ann Hutchinson’s followers had settled. Rhode Island colony allowed the new groups to worship as they liked. Massachusetts Bay authorities, by contrast, viewed the Quaker proselytizers as scandalous heretics and a dangerous threat to public order. They arrested and fined residents for attending Quaker worship, burned Quaker books, and swiftly arrested and punished any Quaker who defied their decrees by setting foot in Boston.

Whippings, having ears cut off, and banishment only increased the resolve of the growing Quaker community to show the Puritans that God’s will could not be denied. As Wenlock Christison warned his Puritan persecutors, “Do not think to weary out the living God by taking away the lives of his servants.” Two English Friends—William Robinson and Marmaduke Stevenson—were hanged in Boston in 1659. Mary Dyer of Rhode Island was reprieved and banished, but returned to Boston in 1660, when she too was hanged. William Leddra was hanged in March 1661. After much lobbying by Friends in England, the newly restored king, Charles II, ordered an end to the Massachusetts persecutions. More than a dozen Quakers were released from the Boston jail in June 1661 and cart-whipped across the Rhode Island border, where they joined Friends from throughout the region for a General Meeting that New England Yearly Meeting claims as its first annual session.

Rhode Island, whose 1664 royal charter guaranteed religious liberty, quickly became a base for Quaker missions to other parts of New England. The neighboring colonies tried unsuccessfully to persuade Rhode Island to rid itself of these “notorious heretics.” Over the next decades, as English settlers spread throughout New England, Quaker meetings multiplied in Rhode Island, in southeastern Massachusetts and Cape Cod, and north from Salem to Dover, Berwick, and

Kittery. New England meetings were visited regularly by ministers such as Elizabeth Hooton, one of the earliest and most stalwart ministers. Relying on a royal grant, Hooton persevered through multiple banishments to secure a meeting place for Boston Friends.

George Fox Visits New England

In 1671, fifteen years after the first Quakers arrived in New England, George Fox visited Friends throughout the American colonies, from the Caribbean northward. He and his traveling companions sought to strengthen meetings and resolve disputes and factions. He also promoted an institutional framework that he believed would enable the growing and dispersed Quaker community to survive and thrive.

After twenty years and often intense persecution, Fox and other Quaker leaders recognized that the movement needed a degree of order and discipline. Friends' emphasis on individual experience and discernment of God's call inherently contained the risk of "Ranterism" or anarchy. Friends insisted that God's Truth was always the same. But inevitably, it seemed, disagreements arose in discerning and interpreting that Truth. After several major disputes among English Friends, a weekly London meeting of recognized ministers began coordinating ministry and strategy, and both local and national groups took steps to disown or testify against those who might call themselves Friends but whose behavior was unacceptable to the bulk of the community.

Fox's recommended structure was similar to that adopted by Presbyterian churches. Friends from one or more worshipping groups were to gather for a monthly meeting for business, under divine guidance, for the "well-ordering and managing" of their practical affairs. Fox insisted that women, who had little voice in other churches, should have their own business meetings. Each monthly meeting was accountable to a quarterly regional meeting, and these in turn to the New England-wide Yearly Meeting. All the Yearly Meetings reported to that in London, which throughout the colonial era maintained a central role. This structure helped the charismatic and prophetic movement evolve—not without controversy—into an orderly, disciplined, and respectable religious society.

Fox arrived in Rhode Island in late May 1672. Friends and non-Friends alike came from all corners of New England to hear this charismatic preacher. Roger Williams, the aged founder of the Providence Plantation, sought to debate with Fox directly, but the two never met. In meeting after meeting, some disrupted by hecklers, Fox demonstrated how God's power could bring the body into spiritual unity. At the close of the General Meeting in Newport, Rhode Island, in June 1672 Fox wrote, "it was hard for Friends to part, for the glorious power of the Lord which was over all and his blessed Truth and life flowing amongst them had so knit and united them together that they spent two days in taking leave of one another, and Friends went away being mightily filled with the presence and power of the Lord."

King Philip's War

In 1676 southern New England was shaken by a devastating war between English settlers and some of the indigenous peoples, following decades of disputes over land usage. A handful of Friends tried without success to negotiate a resolution. Indians and English killed each other's soldiers and non-combatants alike, burned houses and villages, and took captives. Quakers

in the affected area did not object forcibly to the war, nor were they spared its effects. The war solidified English domination of the region, opening new areas to English settlement.

EXPANSION AND CONSOLIDATION, 1676–1750

As English settlements expanded up the coast into Maine, inland, and through southern Rhode Island, new meetings formed. They were nourished by local ministers and elders, a steady flow of itinerant ministers, and the regular exchange of epistles (letters) among men's and women's meetings in England, Ireland, and the colonies. The Great Meetinghouse in Newport, Rhode Island, built in 1699, housed the Yearly Meeting's annual sessions each summer. The Yearly Meeting over this period formulated policies and procedures for membership, marriage, care for poor Friends, resolving disputes, and disownment.

During this period a "Quietist" spirit dominated Friends' worship. Friends were less concerned with evangelism or making converts than with preserving good internal order. Quaker ministers stressed introspection, silent waiting, obedience to the Divine, and avoidance of "creaturely activity" or actions based purely in human will or desire.

At the same time, Friends shared in the economic and geographical expansion of the English colonies. As farmers, ship-owners, merchants, and artisans, they prospered from the growing Atlantic trade in foodstuffs, lumber, whale oil, sugar and molasses, and rum. Quaker shopkeepers and merchants became particularly known for their fixed prices and honest dealings.

Some Friends used indentured labor; some bought and held native people or Africans in a state of slavery. A few participated directly in the slave trade. Through the early decades of the 1700s, a few Friends spoke of their sense that buying, selling, and even holding slaves were actions inconsistent with Truth. But some who spoke out forcefully on this question found themselves silenced or disowned for disrupting the unity of the meeting. Some individuals decided to free their enslaved Africans, or to refrain from buying slaves or using slave labor. In 1715–18 several monthly meetings brought the question to the Yearly Meeting, but Friends could not agree and put the question aside.

New England Quakers continued to suffer civil penalties as a result of how they lived out their moral and spiritual convictions. In Massachusetts and Connecticut, Friends were regularly subjected to fines and seizures of goods for refusing to pay taxes to support Puritan ministers, for refusing to swear oaths, and for marriages not recognized by the government. In Rhode Island, which had no such requirements, Quakers served in and at times dominated the colonial government.

During the periodic wars between England and France, Friends' refusal to train as soldiers brought fines, and occasionally imprisonment. Meetings disciplined those who participated in military trainings, enlisted in the militia, paid substitutes, shipped out on privateering vessels, or paid taxes levied specifically for military expeditions. New England Friends did not, however, take disciplinary action against Quakers serving in the Rhode Island Assembly or as governor, who helped the English war efforts against France in their official capacities.

REFORM, ANTI-SLAVERY, AND WAR, 1750–1790

By the 1750s some Quaker ministers, especially in Philadelphia and England, grew concerned that Friends had become indifferent and apathetic. After a century of “birthright” membership, there were many in the Society who had never had a personal spiritual transformation. Prosperity, hard work, and sharing in the “worldly” social life of their communities left little energy for diligent adherence to the Gospel. The reformers hoped to revive the prophetic faithfulness to Truth that had inspired early Friends.

Although these ministers differed in their emphases, all agreed on the prescription for reform: more diligent attention to discipline. Friends needed to build up the “walls” separating themselves from “the world” and its people, especially the rules against marrying out of the Society. Friends should attend meetings for worship more regularly, keep to plainness of dress and language, and stay away from taverns, social events like weddings and corn huskings, and other entertainments involving vain music and dancing.

In 1760 New England Yearly Meeting, responding to these calls for reform, ordered copies of the Book of Discipline (drawn largely from minutes coming from London) for each monthly meeting and preparative meeting. It directed each meeting to set up visiting committees to visit every Friend’s family, report infractions of the rules, and work to convince the Friend of his or her error. Some offenders acknowledged their errors; others were disowned or indicated that they did not care to continue in membership.

One of the matters for discipline concerned Friends’ use of enslaved labor. By the 1750s the number of Friends opposing or at least troubled by slavery had grown, and meetings found it more difficult to ignore them. John Woolman and Anthony Benezet, respected Philadelphia-area ministers, argued that slavery was inconsistent with the Gospel, especially the golden rule, and with the natural rights of humankind. Woolman traveled throughout New England in 1760, laboring with individual slave-owning families and pressuring the Society’s leaders to clarify that slave-owning was wrong.

New England Yearly Meeting gradually changed the wording in the Book of Discipline to clarify first that Friends should not buy or sell slaves, and then, in 1773, that all should “be discharged & set free from a State of Slavery, that we do no more claim property in the human race.” Those who refused to manumit all those held in slavery were disowned, including some prominent and wealthy members. A few Africans joined New England meetings, and more undoubtedly attended meetings for worship, though, as in other churches, they were often required to sit on a back bench or in the gallery.

Friends faced increasing tensions in the 1770s as conflicts grew between the colonies and Great Britain. Most Friends accepted a religious duty of loyalty to the English monarch, based on Paul’s admonition that the ruling authorities were put there by God and should be obeyed. Many New England Friends also had longstanding commercial links with merchants in England and other English colonies. Epistles from London Yearly Meeting, still considered the parent meeting, stressed the need to preserve unity and avoid disruption.

Some New England Friends embraced the growing protests against Crown excesses. But many others scrupled at cooperating in any way with the rebel government, which seemed to them

an unlawful rebellion against legitimate authority as well as inherently war-making. Friends disagreed over use of Continental currency and taxes levied by the Continental Congress. The Yearly Meeting advised that those with more restrictive scruples should heed them, and that Friends of varying opinions should treat each other with love and charity.

Once war broke out, meetings firmly disciplined Friends who joined the army or navy or supplied them with provisions. As in earlier conflicts, Friends who refused to participate in military activities faced punishment by the civil authorities. Meetings sent lists of these faithful Friends to the Yearly Meeting's Meeting for Sufferings, which apparently reimbursed the penalties.

The war significantly disrupted Friends' lives. During the British military occupation of Newport, Rhode Island, many residents fled the island, and Yearly Meeting sessions had to be held elsewhere. Boston too was occupied by British troops and put under a naval blockade. The Yearly Meeting's newly formed Meeting for Sufferings appointed a committee who delivered relief to Friends and non-Friends alike; Friends in Philadelphia and Britain also contributed to this effort.

ACTIVISM, EDUCATION, AND DIVISION, 1790–1850

Independence brought many changes to the social and economic life of New England Friends. The rural farms that had anchored many pre-war Quaker meetings declined. Meeting minutes recorded a quickening pace of removals to newer meetings in western Massachusetts, Maine, Vermont, and upstate New York. A Quaker-dominated whaling industry in New Bedford largely replaced the older one on Nantucket. Many New England Quakers invested money and energy in local economic development, including textile mills, canals, and later railroads.

Some Friends sought better education for their children, consistent with Quaker ways, to prepare them for roles in the new economy. In 1784 the Yearly Meeting established a small boarding school in Portsmouth, Rhode Island, with subsidies for poor Quaker children. But the school did not attract enough funds or students to continue. By 1819 a renewed concern enabled the Yearly Meeting to reopen a boarding school. Retired merchant Moses Brown gave considerable money and part of his Providence farm for the school building and would serve on the school committee for many years.

A number of Friends joined campaigns to abolish the slave trade and emancipate those held in slavery. During the 1780s, due partly to pressure from these abolition societies, each New England state took steps toward gradual emancipation. In 1783 the Yearly Meeting asked each meeting to examine past manumissions to make sure that Friends had made an appropriate financial settlement to their former servants. But meetings disciplined some radical anti-slavery advocates for being too "warm" or passionate, for participating in anti-slavery groups with non-Quakers, or for accepting violent methods to achieve abolition.

An unknown number of New England Friends helped formerly enslaved people find new lives in New England or in Canada. Whaling captain Paul Cuffe of Westport Meeting, son of a Wampanoag mother and an African father formerly enslaved in a Quaker family, actively promoted self-help programs for freed slaves in Sierra Leone. Other Friends provided financial assistance

to individual freed Africans and to African-run churches, schools, and self-help associations in their New England communities.

The Yearly Meeting Divides

In the 1820s theological differences between more orthodox and more liberal Protestants intensified throughout the wider society. Among Friends, some leaned toward a more “orthodox” view that the Holy Scriptures, inspired by God, stood as the primary authority and that Christ’s death, atonement, and resurrection held the key to salvation. Others, including Long Island minister Elias Hicks, stressed that the ultimate authority was the living Christ (or Holy Spirit), the Bible was essential but not binding, and that inward transformation was the essence of salvation. At least in Philadelphia, the more urban orthodox Friends were more willing to work with non-Friends on abolition and other social causes. Rural “Hicksite” Friends criticized the urban meetings’ worldly education, corruption by wealthy evangelicals and Anglicans, and attempts to centralize authority at the expense of local meetings. Each side claimed to be the sole voice of traditional Quakerism. In 1827 Philadelphia Yearly Meeting formally divided. The schism quickly spread as each Yearly Meeting had to choose which Philadelphia group it would recognize as the legitimate Yearly Meeting.

In 1828 New England Yearly Meeting minuted its unity with “those meetings which have continued steadfast in their adherence to the ancient order, discipline and faith of the Society,” that is, the “Orthodox” branch. Nantucket was the only place where “Hicksites” had enough strength to form a separate meeting. Elsewhere, some individuals left the Society to join Unitarian or other more liberal churches.

In the next major division within the Society of Friends, New England played a major role. In 1836, Joseph John Gurney, an evangelical Friends’ minister from a wealthy English banking family, traveled widely in the United States. He criticized the overly formal, uninspired, tradition-bound atmosphere of many Quaker meetings, urging Friends to actively train ministers and leaders, open Sunday Schools, allow hymn-singing as an aid to worship, use new scholarship to illuminate the Bible, and work with other evangelical Christians on reform causes such as education, abolition, and temperance.

Many Friends in New England found Gurney’s advice exciting, refreshing, and forward-looking. Others, however, recoiled in horror, accusing Gurney of elevating the authority of Scripture over the Holy Spirit itself, and of too much influence from his wealthy and social-activist, Anglican friends. As Gurney traveled in New England, Rhode Island minister John Wilbur followed him to warn Friends against Gurney’s errors. After several more years of vehement arguments, in 1845 the majority Gurneyites dissolved Wilbur’s meeting to force Wilbur’s disownment. After an unsuccessful appeal, Wilbur and his supporters, outraged, reconstituted their meeting and joined with like-minded Friends to form their own Yearly Meeting.

After the division the larger “Gurneyite” body, calling itself “the Yearly Meeting of Friends for New England,” had about 8,000 members, most of the meetinghouses, and the Providence boarding school. Most orthodox Yearly Meetings, including London, recognized it as the legitimate body. The smaller “Wilburite” body, retaining the name of “New England Yearly Meeting

of Friends,” had about 500 members concentrated in rural Rhode Island. Both meetings continued to use the 1809 Book of Discipline, and both held their Yearly Meeting sessions in late June, as they had since 1661. For almost a century, they barely acknowledged each other’s existence.

During the Civil War, many Friends struggled to reconcile their fervent desire for abolition of slavery with their equally fervent opposition to war. This time, however, meetings generally did not discipline men who served in the Union Army. The peace testimony remained official policy, but increasingly the concrete decisions on how to live it out were considered matters for individual discernment.

A DIVIDED HERITAGE, 1865–1915: TWO YEARLY MEETINGS

The Yearly Meeting of Friends for New England (Gurneyite)

For several decades after the separation, the Gurneyite meetings retained traditional patterns of Quaker life and worship. In the late 1800s, however, many meetings adopted a new format, with a paid pastor and a programmed worship service. This “pastoral” system began in the Midwest, as traveling ministers sought to make sure new converts were nurtured and did not fall away, and meetings tried to ensure more consistent leadership by releasing a minister from other paid employment. Some Friends feared that meetings would depend too much on the pastor and fail to develop other members’ gifts in ministry. By 1910, however, virtually all Gurneyite meetings in New England used the new pattern. Many remodeled their meetinghouses to add a raised platform, a pulpit, and an organ. Most meetings had active Sunday Schools; some had Christian Endeavor youth groups and periodic revival meetings.

Gurneyite Friends in New England, echoing Friends’ early enthusiasm for spreading their message, joined in the Protestant zeal for foreign missions. Sybil and Eli Jones of Maine opened a girls’ school in Ramallah, Palestine, which came under the Yearly Meeting’s care in 1888. In 1884 the Women’s Yearly Meeting established a Women’s Foreign Mission Society “to promote the knowledge of the Gospel among heathen women and children, and to assist in their Christian education.” Adults and children throughout New England learned about people in other parts of the world, prayed for them, and sent books and supplies. New England women joined with those in eleven other Yearly Meetings to form the Women’s Foreign Missionary Union of Friends, forerunner of the United Society of Friends Women. Many New England Friends spent anywhere from one year to most of their working lives serving in Quaker missions in Palestine, Cuba, East Africa, and elsewhere as teachers, doctors, or evangelists.

The Yearly Meeting of Friends for New England welcomed opportunities to join with like-minded Friends elsewhere. It sent representatives to an 1887 conference in Richmond, Indiana, which produced a common statement of principles known as the Richmond Declaration of Faith. In 1888 the Gurneyite Yearly Meeting minuted its acceptance of this declaration. The minutes included a report from Friends who attended the Richmond Conference, which said, “[The Conference] produced and published a Declaration of Christian Doctrine, which it is

hoped and believed will have a salutary influence upon Friends everywhere. We believe that its excellence is not in its force as a creed, not that it is a perfect summary of Christian truth, but because on the whole it is the most complete statement of doctrine which the time and means at hand allowed, given forth by a body of large experience, of intellectual power and religious weight; and that whatever defects exist in it, still it carries the weight and influence of a broader representation of the Society of Friends, than ever assembled on any other occasion.”

In 1902 the same meetings formed the Five Years’ Meeting (later renamed Friends United Meeting), and approved a Uniform Discipline, which the Gurneyite New England body adopted. These New England Friends were increasingly linked with other Gurneyite Friends through the Five Years’ Meeting, periodic conferences, pastors who moved between Yearly Meetings, and the weekly *American Friend*.

New England Yearly Meeting of Friends (Wilburite)

Wilburite Friends, though few in number, held fast to the Quaker ways of life and worship as they understood them. Like their Quietist forebears, they treasured waiting worship and ministry given by any member called to it. They valued the Inward Christ more than the “outward” or historical Christ, though they remained deeply rooted in the Bible. They distrusted any source of knowledge outside the Spirit, particularly rational or secular education, and opposed participation in outside causes or mixed societies. The New England body corresponded with Wilburite and conservative bodies in Ohio, North Carolina, Iowa, and Canada, as well as with Philadelphia (Orthodox) Yearly Meeting—sending and receiving epistles and traveling ministers.

By 1900, however, the Wilburite Yearly Meeting also began to change. Younger Friends seemed less concerned than their parents with maintaining purity of doctrine and practice at all costs. Meetings relaxed their enforcement of the Discipline on matters such as dress and marriage outside the Society, although the written rules remained in place and offenders had to make public acknowledgement of infractions. By 1907 the Yearly Meeting gave up separate men’s and women’s business sessions. Opposition to higher education faded, as an increasing number attended non-Quaker boarding schools and colleges. While some members still farmed, many undertook professional work as doctors, bankers, and teachers that increasingly took them away from the Rhode Island communities where the Wilburite meetings had been rooted.

THE GROWING SEARCH FOR UNITY, 1914–1945

World War I

Throughout World War I Friends of both Yearly Meetings maintained their formal opposition to war, both as a personal testimony and in attempts to influence public policy. Meetings sent letters to President Wilson supporting the League of Nations proposal, and lauding the 1913 peace declaration of Germany’s Kaiser Wilhelm. Some Friends joined the new interfaith Fellowship of Reconciliation.

When the United States entered the war and introduced conscription, some New England Friends refused to register for the draft, which, due to the fact that conscientious objector status

did not exist at the time, resulted in imprisonment and sometimes torture. Others chose hospital work or other non-combatant duty within the military. In contrast to most earlier wars, meetings did not discipline these Friends. Some Friends worked with the newly formed American Friends Service Committee, which sought to bring together Friends from all branches for common relief projects and to provide an alternative to military service. Following the war, an All-Friends Conference in 1920, hosted by London Yearly Meeting, brought together Friends of all branches from throughout North America and Europe to consider the spiritual roots of the peace testimony.

1920s: Struggle and Decline

During the 1920s many New England meetings struggled. Young people left rural communities for mill towns, cities, and better farmland in the West. Farm income fluctuated widely.

Many of the Gurneyite pastoral meetings had trouble supporting a paid pastor, relying on students, non-Quaker preachers, or part-time ministers. Some joined in federation with another church. Yearly Meeting of Friends for New England's leaders pleaded for young people to consider a call to pastoral ministry or service in overseas missions. College exposed an increasing number of Quaker youth to new theories of psychology and Biblical criticism, which led many students to challenge accepted orthodoxies.

In 1925 the Gurneyite Yearly Meeting substantially changed the mission of its boarding school (renamed for Moses Brown) to a college preparatory program for boys only. The Yearly Meeting acquired Lincoln School, a private girls' school in Providence, and also took on care of Oak Grove Academy in Maine.

The Wilburite New England Yearly Meeting of Friends also struggled. The meeting dwindled numerically; by 1920 it had only about 125 members in three monthly meetings. As attendance declined, midweek meetings, long a mark of spiritual faithfulness, were shifted from mornings to evenings and then discontinued; meetings for business shifted to weekends, to accommodate Friends with professional jobs. A few traditionalists viewed these changes with alarm, as a sign of declining faith.

By the early 1930s, the older generation of Wilburite ministers and elders had died. Many of the Yearly Meeting's younger leaders held professional jobs in Boston, New York, or Philadelphia and participated in meetings there, but retained their membership in Rhode Island and returned faithfully for Yearly Meeting sessions and committee meetings. But they worried about the spiritual vitality and very existence of their small Yearly Meeting. In 1930 the Wilburite Yearly Meeting adopted a new Book of Discipline—its first since 1809—drawn largely from the 1926 Faith & Practice of Philadelphia (Orthodox) Yearly Meeting.

Building on relationships developed through AFSC and the 1920 All-Friends Conference, the two Yearly Meetings in New England began cautiously to exchange official epistles and visitors, recognizing their differences but grateful for a shared spirit of Christian fellowship. Younger Friends from the two bodies held joint social activities beginning in the late 1930s. Some Friends wondered if it might be possible to merge the two Yearly Meetings. But many found the differences in size and worship style insurmountable.

New Meetings

The 1930s also saw the rise of new unprogrammed meetings within New England, mostly in college towns, which practiced waiting worship without a paid pastor. They brought together Friends (both students and teachers) from a variety of yearly meetings around the country, as well as pacifists and religious seekers attracted by Friends' message or form of worship. The new groups were encouraged and facilitated by the Advancement Committee of Friends General Conference (a national organization of Hicksite meetings) and by the Message Committee of the American Friends Service Committee, as well as by leading Friends such as Rufus Jones, Professor of Philosophy at Haverford College and editor of *American Friend*. The new meetings in New England, like many others around the country, chose not to affiliate with either of the existing Yearly Meetings, which they felt represented outdated factions. Several received formal recognition by the American Friends Fellowship Council. The independent meetings grew rapidly during the 1930s, often incorporating members from the two Yearly Meetings.

Most of these new meetings followed a new model with a loosely knit structure, a weak (if any) central organization, frequent rotation of officers, and authority centered in the general membership rather than an elite class of ministers and elders. Membership criteria were loose and flexible, allowing for multiple affiliations and broad freedom of conscience and belief. In many meetings formal membership became almost irrelevant, as all attenders were encouraged to participate freely in vocal ministry and in meetings for business. Seating was arranged in a circle or square, with no elevated facing benches, reflecting an ideal of spiritual democracy. Many of those drawn to the new meetings came from churches they experienced as dogmatic, insular, and authoritarian. Desiring a spiritual home that was totally open and welcoming, many resisted suggestions of obedience to discipline.

Steps Toward Merger

Friends from diverse parts of the Quaker world increasingly worked together on common projects. In 1937 a Second World Conference at Swarthmore and Haverford Colleges brought together all who called themselves Friends for fellowship and mutual inspiration, and established an ongoing Friends World Committee for Consultation. New England Friends from the two Yearly Meetings as well as from the independent meetings became part of this organization. During World War II, Friends throughout New England held conferences to discuss conscription, financially supported men in Civilian Public Service camp and prison, and contributed funds and knit sweaters for AFSC material aid programs. In 1943 Friends in New England joined with others from all branches throughout the United States to form the Friends Committee on National Legislation to lobby Congress for changes in U.S. policy.

During the war the question of formally merging the various Quaker groups in New England resurfaced. The growing independent meetings had shifted the demographic balance between "programmed" and "unprogrammed" Friends, easing fears that the pastoral Gurneyite meetings might overwhelm the small Wilburite meetings. By 1944 the two Yearly Meetings and the independent meetings of New England agreed in principle on a merger. Each group was assured that it would not have to change its form of worship, its membership criteria, or its preferred Book of Discipline (if any). On that basis, each group approved the merger.

UNITY AND DIVERSITY, 1945–2007

The reunited New England Yearly Meeting first met in June 1945 with Rufus Jones, long an advocate of unity, as honorary presiding clerk. The meeting quickly affirmed its membership in the Five Years' Meeting (later FUM).

Within a few years the Yearly Meeting prepared a new Faith & Practice, reflecting the diversity of beliefs and practices among its meetings. Rhode Island Monthly Meeting, which had expressed hesitations about the merger, found the new book unacceptable, and withdrew from New England Yearly Meeting to join what is now Evangelical Friends Church—Eastern Region.

As hoped, the united Yearly Meeting found new energy for expansion and activity. Junior Yearly Meeting, begun in the Gurneyite meeting in 1930, expanded significantly. The Yearly Meeting gradually added full-time youth staff and a growing program of weekend youth retreats. In 1953 the Yearly Meeting opened a summer youth camp in China, Maine.

New England Friends have continued their concern for education, albeit in different forms. The Yearly Meeting ended its oversight of Lincoln School in 1976—though the school continues to affirm its Quaker roots and values—while Moses Brown became coeducational. The Moses Brown boarding department closed in 1982. Some New England Friends with a concern for education founded The Meeting School in New Hampshire (1957), Cambridge Friends School (1961), and Friends School of Portland (2005).

The Gurneyite home for aged Friends in Amesbury, Massachusetts, moved to Hingham, Massachusetts, renamed as New England Friends Home, and later became a certified assisted-living facility. Beacon Hill Friends House and Woolman Hill, each initially proposed as a Yearly Meeting project, were established as independent institutions. In 1974 a concern for aging Friends took shape as an intentional community in North Easton, Massachusetts, though financial difficulties eventually forced the sale of the homes and the laying down of the meeting there.

New England Friends have also engaged with social issues locally and overseas, often in cooperation with the American Friends Service Committee. Many participated in vigils leading to the 1962 Nuclear Test Ban Treaty. During the Vietnam War, many Friends provided draft counseling and at least one meetinghouse served as sanctuary to an AWOL soldier. Friends' long tradition of peacemaking has attracted many new attenders, some of whom remain more interested in social activism than in traditional Quaker teachings. A number of Friends have undertaken prison ministries, leading to recognized worship groups in several correctional facilities. NEYM has endorsed the Earth Charter, and many meetings and individual Friends actively witness for and engage in stewardship of the Earth.

New England Friends have also been involved in various forms of activity against racial segregation and discrimination. Many participated in "Fair Housing" campaigns. Starting in 1969, the Yearly Meeting, responding in part to demands by "Black Power" groups for reparations for African-Americans, raised over \$100,000 for scholarships for minority students at Friends' schools and for economic development projects in poor and minority communities in New England.

Some Friends have participated in educational programs against racism, while others have joined with other Friends of African descent to explore and strengthen their identity as Friends of color.

Changing societal mores during the 1970s also influenced the Yearly Meeting. As divorce increased, many Friends openly questioned traditional testimonies on marriage and sexuality. These conversations moved from the back porch at Yearly Meeting sessions into a committee of Ministry and Counsel, which in 1976 published *Living With Oneself and Others*, a thoughtful exploration of sexual ethics, marriage, divorce, and family life. Gay and lesbian Friends and their allies began to join members of the wider society in advocating for recognition of their identity and families, including the right to marry under the care of the meeting. Many Friends experienced these changes as the fruits of deep and often painful spiritual discernment. Some Friends feared too much influence from the secular and media-driven world. Many monthly meetings have approved taking same-gender marriages or unions under their care, although as of 2008 the Yearly Meeting has not found unity as a body on this question.

New England Friends have maintained connections with Friends in other parts of the world. A steady list of New England Friends have worked with Quaker meetings, institutions, and projects in Ramallah, East Africa, and elsewhere, under the care of Friends United Meeting, the American Friends Service Committee, and Right Sharing of World Resources, among others. Many others have worked with Central American refugees, economic development projects, and mediation of international conflicts. Many Friends have participated in international Quaker gatherings, including hosting FWCC's 20th Triennial in New Hampshire in 2000. Young adult Friends from New England attended World Gatherings of Young Friends in 1985 and 2005, and in 1991 attended three Young Friends International Gatherings, each following one location of FWCC's Fifth World Conference of Friends.

Challenged by this conference and a keynote address given at the 1991 NEYM Sessions by a Cuban Friend, Yearly Meeting subsequently approved establishing a "sister relationship" with Friends in Cuba. Through annual visits in both directions, this "Puente de Amigos" has enriched the spiritual life of both yearly meetings.

Since 1945 the number of unprogrammed meetings has grown, most adopting the model of the formerly independent meetings. In 1959 the united body joined Friends General Conference, an association of primarily liberal, unprogrammed meetings and yearly meetings, while continuing its primary ties with Friends United Meeting. As of 2008, only seven meetings retain pastoral leadership and programmed worship, and few of the others have any paid staff. New England meetings have attracted a wide range of seekers, many of whom describe their spiritual path in other than Christian terms.

Almost a quarter of NEYM's current monthly meetings were established after 1980. A third of our meetings and worship groups are small (under twenty-five participants). Many meetings, small and large, have attracted a large number of new Friends. Some, however, have expressed the need for more grounding in Friends' ways.

Our diversity has created both rich and inspiring variety as well as tension within New England Yearly Meeting. Many contemporary controversies echo those of the past: disagreements about the relative authority of the Bible and immediate spiritual experience, cultural and political dif-

ferences, differing views on the authority of yearly and monthly meetings over their members, and differing leadings towards Christian evangelism and social or political activism.

For more than three hundred and fifty years, Quakers in New England have experienced a living faith, rooted in a prophetic vision, and put into practice by each believer in his or her own life and by communities of believers acting together. Friends have responded to myriad challenges with the confidence, born of experience, that a people willing to follow God's promptings in their hearts can continue Christ's work in the world. Continued study of our past and ongoing waiting on God in communal worship and spiritual discernment can illuminate the path on which we are now called to travel.

For further reading:

Howard Brinton (updated by Margaret Hope Bacon), *Friends for 350 Years*. Wallingford, PA: Pendle Hill Publications, 2002.

Ben Pink Dandelion, *An Introduction to Quakerism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007.

Thomas D. Hamm, *The Quakers in America*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2003

— *The Transformation of American Quakerism: Orthodox Friends, 1800–1907*. Terre Haute, IN: Indiana University Press, 1988.

Allan Kohrman, *New England Yearly Meeting of Friends: 1945–1995*. Worcester, MA: Mosher Book and Tract Committee, NEYM, 1995.

John Punshon, *Portrait in Grey: A Short History of the Quakers*. London: Quaker Home Service, 1984.

George A. Selleck, *Quakers in Boston, 1656–1964*. Cambridge, MA: Friends Meeting at Cambridge, 1976.

10 REVISIONS TO THIS FAITH AND PRACTICE

The Yearly Meeting at its annual session has sole authority to change or add to this book of Faith and Practice.

Proposals for changes to particular sections of Faith and Practice (like other Yearly Meeting business) may come to the Yearly Meeting business session either from a Yearly Meeting committee or from a quarterly meeting. A monthly meeting wishing to propose revisions should bring a minute to its quarterly meeting, which after due consideration may forward it to the Yearly Meeting with its endorsement.

If the Yearly Meeting business session approves an amendment, the revised or new text should be published with the minutes of that session. The change takes provisional effect upon that preliminary approval, and meetings and individuals are encouraged to use it for a year to gauge its practical effect and help Friends discern whether the change is rightly ordered. The amendment must then come to a subsequent Yearly Meeting business session (normally in the subsequent year) for final approval. Copies of the revised text will then be made widely available in a form easily inserted into the printed book.

From time to time the Yearly Meeting may see that it would be desirable to review and revise the entire book of Faith and Practice. When this occurs, the Yearly Meeting shall establish an appropriate committee and define the scope of its work. In any event, the text of any successor or replacement Faith and Practice must be approved at two annual sessions of the Yearly Meeting, and should be widely distributed throughout the Yearly Meeting during the revision and approval process.

... so far as [our gracious Creator's] love influences our minds, so far we become interested in his workmanship and feel a desire to take hold of every opportunity to lessen the distresses of the afflicted and increase the happiness of the creation. Here we have a prospect of one common interest from which our own is inseparable—that to turn all the treasures we possess into the channel of universal love becomes the business of our lives.

John Woolman (date unknown)

The advices and queries elsewhere in this book help us to discern what God is asking of us in specific areas of our lives. These general advices and queries challenge us to turn to the Inward Teacher and to nurture faithfulness as a foundation for every thought and action. We seek the particular ways we might be led to serve the one common interest of which Woolman speaks, both as individuals and as meetings, “turning all we possess into the channel of universal love.”

Advices convey the wisdom gained from the inward experiences of Friends trying to live faithfully in the Light. They may reassure us, counsel us, or challenge us. Queries are tools directing us toward the Source of guidance as we reflect on our current condition, as individuals or as meetings. They elicit responses, but not answers. The value of the queries lies in our thoughtful consideration of them, recognizing both the response that rises out of our current condition and the one that expresses our aspirations. Bringing these two responses together is a continuing challenge as we strive to live faithfully. While we may formulate queries related to particular situations, these general advices and queries can be used again and again as a spiritual tool as we grow and change.

It is a common practice for meeting communities to use the advices and queries for inspiration and as a guide for reflection on their spiritual health. Some meetings read an advice and/or a query in meeting for worship or meeting for business. Other meetings have special gatherings to consider a query or a set of queries, where Friends can speak their thoughts and personal experiences during a period of worshipful listening.

Individual Friends use the advices and queries as part of their personal devotional practice and as tools for self-examination, finding both inspiration and challenge in them.

Pray with advices and queries; hold them in your hearts. Consider each of them at some time. Feel which speak to you, challenge you, show you the way. When a query could be answered with a simple “yes” or “no,” go further and ask “why,” “how,” or “when.”

ADVICES

- 1 Take heed, dear Friends, to the promptings of love and truth in your hearts. Seek to live in affection as true Friends in your meetings, in your families, in all your dealing with

- others, and in your relationship with outward society.
- 2 Seek to lead others to Truth through love. Let us teach by being ourselves teachable. We are all humble learners in the school of Christ.
 - 3 Do not fear periods of doubt and questions; they may lead to openings.
 - 4 Make space in your daily life for communion with God and for spiritual nurture through prayer, reading, meditation, and other disciplines which open you to the Spirit.
 - 5 No one human being or group has the full measure of the Light. Seek to understand the experience of those whose theology and practices differ from your own. Take opportunities to enter into prayer and work with the wider community of faith. Find ways to articulate your own faith so that it may be shared with others.
 - 6 Ground your spiritual life in your own experience of the Divine. Speak and act from that experience.
 - 7 Trust that the Inner Light can lead us beyond our individual perceptions and desires into action grounded in God's truth.
 - 8 Stand still, wait for divine guidance, then act.
 - 9 Attend to the Spirit at work in the ordinary activities and experiences of your daily life. There is inspiration to be found all around us, in the natural world, in the sciences and arts, in our work and friendships, in our sorrows as well as in our joys. Be open to and alert for how the Spirit may be speaking to you in fresh ways, leading you in new directions.
 - 10 Examine your leadings through a process of discernment to determine whether or not they are grounded in the Spirit. Test your discernment with your faith community.
 - 11 Be alert to how "way opens." It may be revealed through a door closing.
 - 12 Be grateful for the gifts you have. Neither be too proud of them nor value them too little. Do not waste time coveting the gifts of others.
 - 13 Offer up your time, talents, energy, and resources for God's guidance in their use. You may find yourself called to work for which you feel you have no gift. With prayer and discernment you will understand how to respond to the call.
 - 14 Let your life speak.
 - 15 Remember that love is a gift of the Divine, not simply a human emotion. As imperfect human beings we are not always able to feel loving toward one another, but by opening ourselves to the Light Within, we can receive and give love beyond our human capacity.
 - 16 Attend to what love requires of you.

Humbly seek out that of God in the way others live, and find what's deeply right in it.
 Talk about your spiritual journey explicitly. Find words for that which is hard or strange.
 Evangelize. Spread the good news.
 Never be absolutely sure that you are right.
 Abandon your forms when they do not fulfill God's will.
 Find in your faith things to live humbly by and to die for.
 Do your work. Call others to do theirs.
 With your sins and the sins of your parents: admit them, repent them, heal the wounds.
 Read the Bible.
 Have joyful worship. Do not always be somber.
 Face your fears and your powerlessness. Have faith.
 Know who you are spiritually, and trust God to know where you are going.
 Deny the distractions. Follow only God.
 Love boldly. Share deeply.
 Forgive and forgive and forgive.

QUERIES FOR INDIVIDUALS AND MEETING COMMUNITIES

Ask yourself: Am I down in the flaming center of God? Have I come into the deeps, where the soul meets with God and knows His Love and power? Have I discovered God as a living Immediacy, a sweet Presence, and a stirring, life-renovating Power within me? Do I walk by His guidance, ...knowing every day and every act to be a sacrament?

Thomas Kelly 1966

- 1 How does Truth prosper among you?
- 2 “You will say, Christ saith this, and the apostles say this; but what canst thou say? Art thou a child of Light and hast walked in the Light, and what thou speakest, is it inwardly from God?”
- 3 Do you allow the Inward Teacher to work in you? Are you teachable?
- 4 Is every aspect of your life open to the transforming power of God? What stands in the way?
- 5 Are you open to the many ways Spirit may speak to you?
- 6 Do you recognize divinely inspired insight? Can you distinguish between divine leadings and

your own needs or desires?

7 To whom or to what are you accountable?

8 How does your faith relate to the Christian heritage of the Religious Society of Friends?

9 What do Jesus' life and ministry mean to you?

10 Do you look for opportunities to deepen your understanding of the history and testimonies of the Religious Society of Friends? Do you inform yourself about the diversity of Friends' theology and



God's love?

14 Are you ready to respond to any concern God may lay upon you, large or small?

15 Do you maintain an appropriate balance among work, service, worship, family, and recreation? Are you ready to rest if God asks it of you?

16 What does love require of you?

EXTRACTS

The corporate Queries are designed to direct one's attention—more accurately, the meeting community's attention—to the most important aspects of Quaker spirituality. Rather than making a declaration of the Truth, these questions are designed to engage Friends with important issues in such a way that the truth becomes clear.

By truth I mean truth with a capital 'T,' as it often appears in early Quaker writings. ...

The genius of the Queries is that they will engage us wherever we are, spiritually and physically. ... Of necessity Queries are stuck in the moment in time at which they were written down, and sometimes their wording seems archaic or the issues they address are not phrased as we would phrase them today. I would suggest that this is not a shortcoming, and that our efforts to wrap our understanding around the Queries and make them real to us in this moment and place are part of the process of revelation.

... The Advices are the voice of earlier generations of my faith community, passing on their wisdom to those embracing the faith in the present day. They inspire me because I know in my heart the effort these Friends made to live up to them in their day; they challenge me because they are an unambiguous declaration that our inward spiritual condition will inevitably shape and direct our outward lives. If I cannot live in harmony with any part of the Advices, I must undertake a serious self-examination to see whether I am straying from these underlying principles, or am lacking the courage to put my faith into action.

Lloyd Lee Wilson 2005

Individual Experiences with Advices and Queries

In 1652 Margaret Fell experienced the power of queries in the preaching of George Fox in her church in Ulverston.

“You will say, Christ saith this, and the apostles say this; but what canst thou say? Art thou a child of Light and hast walked in the Light, and what thou speakest, is it inwardly from God?”

This opened me so that it cut me to the heart; and then I saw clearly we were all wrong. So I sat me down in my pew again, and cried bitterly. And I cried in my spirit to the Lord, “We are all thieves, we are all thieves, we have taken the Scriptures in words and know nothing of them in ourselves.”

Margaret Fox in George Fox 1694

On the Sunday between my mother’s death and her funeral I attended meeting for worship in Chichester. It was one of those blessed meetings that seemed designed specifically to speak to my condition. A Friend had been charged with the task of choosing an advice to read at the beginning of worship. One particular phrase from it struck me forcefully: “Attend to what love requires of you.” It was a phrase that echoed and re-echoed in my mind over the days and weeks that followed. It was something to hold onto, something simple to bring me back to Center when things got overwhelming or difficult. I wrote myself a note and set it where I would be sure to see it on the morning of my mother’s funeral. “Attend to what love requires of you” and I breathed it in and out as I waited to begin the service, aware of the ocean of love and prayer support which was holding me up and reaching into me with its stilling, calming influence. I turned it into a query to ask myself each day and in each situation: “What does Love require of me today?” “What does Love require of me right now?”

Margaret (Maggie) Edmondson 2008

C. Wess Daniels visited a meeting where he found printed queries on the benches.

I was impacted by these spiritually directed questions this past week when I purchased a new/used bike for my commute. As I was trying to customize the bike to fit my needs I continued to battle the desire to really trick it out, add some of the really nice (i.e., expensive) parts to it to make it extra sweet. One query kept running through my head though, prompting me to wait and consider the choices I was about to make.

Do I recognize when I have enough?

See I’ve reflected on that query a few times in my morning prayer time and it came back to me at the most inopportune time! But I took it seriously and considered it. Because of it I changed my mind about some of the things I was going to do because they were beyond what I really needed. And that’s it, spiritual formation consists in stopping, reflecting and considering where our lives in Christ fit into the choices we make on a daily basis. This process takes a lifetime and I need all the help I can get.

C. Wess Daniels 2006

In 1864 Daniel Pickard bemoans the 1860 changes in one of the Queries Addressed to Ministers and Elders by London Yearly Meeting on preserving love and unity with one another. He was distressed by the 1832 change to the query that revised an earlier query

from “harmoniously laboring” to “endeavoring in harmony.” His distress with the 1860 revision is that the sense of laboring together has been eliminated.

[Query pre-1832] “Are they preserved in love and unity with one another, harmoniously laboring for the advancement of Truth, and the spreading thereof?”

O! The thorough convincement of what the truth is; the allegiance to it; the oneness of heart and mind; the brotherly confidence, which must have been to a large extent the happy experience of Friends in those days, to warrant them in issuing so near, so intimate a Query as this! Alas! There is no such freedom, no such courage now...

[Query 1832] “Are Ministers and Elders preserved in love, and in unity one with another, endeavouring in harmony to promote the advancement and spreading of the truth?”

By the revision of 1860 all that remains to be answered as a query are the first few words, “are they preserved in love?”... [He objects to the reason given for this change, part of which states] “it has sometimes been felt difficult to tenderly sensitive minds to assent to a clear affirmative reply to this Query and the attempt to qualify the answer to meet such cases has tended rather to endanger that harmony, which it is the object of the Query to promote.”

Here again by a plausible frame of words, is a case of difficulty evaded and not met; the precious cause of Truth and of harmony therein, is affectedly promoted, but in reality dishonoured and let down. It is made to appear by the above extract that no particular disunity had existed among Ministers and Elders, except such as what is ascribable for its origin to the “tenderly sensitive” condition or constitution of some minds. Oh! How deeply specious, how far from the simplicity of candour, is such language as this!

Daniel Pickard 1864

11.01

Corporate Responses to Queries in Meetings for Business

Third day, the thirteenth of the month, the meeting was engaged during a great part of the day in the reading of the queries and the answers, and in the consideration of the state of Society, as exhibited in those answers. On these subjects the minutes say: Faithful responses to these searching and important queries develop, as in former years, deficiencies in the support of some of our various testimonies, and a lively concern was manifest in the meeting on this account. All the different testimonies which our religious society has felt itself required to bear, we have no doubt are firmly based on Christian ground; and Friends were entreated not to shrink from a faithful support of them, although, in so doing, in relation to some of them, we may be brought to appear peculiar and distinct from the world. The experience of this Society fully demonstrates that this very peculiarity has proved a hedge of safety about us, and that loss has been sustained by those who have disregarded it. Friends were exhorted to undiminished zeal in the observance of those Christian practices which our discipline enjoins—that the standard of Truth may be still faithfully upheld by us before the world.

The British Friend 1854

The monthly meetings in Iowa Yearly Meeting (Conservative) are asked to consider one query a month in meeting for business and minute a corporate response which is forwarded

to the Yearly Meeting. A summary answer is chosen by the assistant clerk, read at Yearly Meeting session and printed in the Minute Book. The following is a response to Query 1 on Meeting for Worship.

Friends have differing responses to and interpretations for many of the terms of the queries, such as worship, Holy Spirit, communion. Some described waiting with expectation or excitement, others more with openness, seeking to be “awake,” sometimes with restlessness or fear. Some wait filling the silence with prior insights, familiar passages or memories. We are at different stages of learning to be silent. One looks forward to “clarity of word and thought,” and is uplifted by that of others. One misses more verbal communication, and another fears that the Divine might be spoken and not recognized.

Iowa Yearly Meeting (Conservative) 1998–2006

In 2004, Canadian Yearly Meeting appointed a Consultation and Renewal Working Group (C’nR) to conduct a listening project throughout Canadian Yearly Meeting. Eight queries were sent to all active monthly meetings and worship groups. After meeting with all these groups, the C’nR reported the following to Canadian Yearly Meeting in 2006.

Query 2. How can we openly engage with the diverse Quaker theology within our Yearly Meeting?

11.02

Many Friends and attenders seem to feel that a disinterest in theology is a requirement for being a Quaker. Others are very disturbed by this disinterest. The Consultation and Renewal Working Group believes that this Query raised the number one issue in Canadian Yearly Meeting—whether our diversity is causing us to become an “anything goes” religion and will eventually result in us losing a coherent identity. Most Friends believe that we should be open to diverse theology and different points of view; however we tend not to engage with our diversity. We keep our points of view to ourselves because we often get burned by unpleasant or hurtful responses from others when we share. This seems to affect Christians more than others; e.g., “I believe in Jesus, but I wouldn’t think of mentioning it in a Quaker meeting.” Christians feel silenced because it too often happens that others say (even in response to ministry in Meeting for Worship) that they are offended by Christian language. When asked about non-Christian/Christocentric tension most Friends agreed that it has created difficulties in their group and that the Christians are the ones leaving. This was often connected with the baggage that Friends and attenders have brought with them from other churches. Very few of us were born into Quaker families. We study our history because of difficulty with defining ourselves in the present.

11.03

On the whole appreciation was expressed for diversity of thought and practice. In fact, there was a strong sense that diversity is our main strength and attraction, along with the practice of being “tolerant” and “non-judgmental.” Our lack of creed and dogma, and the opportunity for each person to shape their own spiritual path is very important to Canadian Friends. Along with this is appreciation for the testimonies which were sometimes seen as the alternative to a creed. Some thought that we tend to use our testimonies as a creed. Alongside all the praise for diversity was a small but persistent voice that said yes but, we can’t be all things to all people and we do have commonly held values which we should openly adhere to.

[New query written by C’nR] Can we learn to worship together using the different languages of our diverse beliefs and traditions?

In North Carolina Yearly Meeting (Conservative), monthly meetings consider a query each month and minute a corporate response which is forwarded to the Yearly Meeting. Every meeting's response is printed in the minute book. The following is one meeting's response to Query #7.

Query #7: Do we endeavor to live in the life and power that takes away the occasion of all war, seeking to do our part in the work of reconciliation between individuals, groups, and nations? Do we faithfully maintain our testimony against nuclear and all other military preparations, the bearing of arms, and all participation in war?

Rich Square Monthly Meeting: Our sense is that as a meeting we strive to be clear under the headings of this query. We recognize that being in harmony with all human beings requires being in harmony with the Divine. But we are constantly aware of areas in our lives in which we see the challenges in the query. There are always new parts of our lives that are opening for examination, such as disharmony with our place in Creation which can be occasion for discord and war.

11.04

North Carolina Yearly Meeting (Conservative) 2007

In Mount Toby (MA) Meeting, the clerk poses a question after the opening worship of meeting for business. Friends respond to the query out of worship and the recording clerk crafts a minute expressing a corporate response.

The clerk invites Friends to reflect on the question “What are our hopes and expectations for the new clerk and meeting for business this year?”

Friends expressed a deep understanding of and appreciation for the spiritual foundations of Quaker decision-making and the way we conduct our meetings for business within the context of worship. Many see meeting for business as an essential component of the Quaker experience and express hope that more of our community will be drawn into this aspect of Mt. Toby life.

It is important to find ways to let the meeting community as a whole understand what goes on in meeting for business beyond just reading the minutes. Attention to business is an underpinning of Quaker practice. In participating in meeting for business we understand how decisions are made. We see the respect that people have for each other and how we are guided by the spirit.

The regular change of leadership allows different clerks to exercise various gifts over time in the life of the meeting. The Quaker belief in continuing revelation is as true in meeting for business as it is in worship. The form is old and beautiful but there are still opportunities for innovation and new perspectives. Ideally our committees also function with a sense of ministry so that issues they bring forward to the clerk and to meeting for business are well seasoned and ready for discernment.

11.05

Friends appreciate the dedication of so many of our members who attend meeting for business year after year, decade after decade, and have carried with such commitment this body of care, concern, and action. It is important for those of us who have come more recently to embrace that commitment with more passion. It is important for us to come not out of obligation but

because we see the value of it in the life of our meeting. Our hope is that meeting for business will instill a spirit in us that we can carry out in our daily life and in all our dealings with others.

Mount Toby Monthly Meeting 2008

Advices first appeared in the form of epistles sent among Friends to encourage and strengthen one another in their faith. The earliest surviving collection of Advices was issued from Balby in England in 1656.

Queries originally related to specific items of information requested of local meetings from central bodies of Friends. In New England Yearly Meeting queries began in 1706 as “Inquiries” and were just that—inquiries into how faithfully Friends were adhering to “truth testimony.” By the 1740s, the Queries had expanded to include reports on the spiritual state of the meeting, the number of new convincements, and Friends’ faithfulness on matters such as refusing to bear arms and plainness of speech and apparel. Right community behavior was clearly set out in Yearly Meeting minutes, which were later collected as a Book of Discipline. The advices carried the weight of “correct” responses to the inquiries, and this correctness was often gauged by behavior. There were consequences for “incorrect” responses, including disownment of those continuing in unacceptable behavior.

New England meetings used the London queries until 1760, when the Yearly Meeting adopted its own queries. The Yearly Meeting directed that the answers sent through the quarterly meetings to Yearly Meeting should be “full and explicit, comprising the substance of every part of each query, in order that this meeting, being rightly informed of the state of the church in general, the needful advice and assistance may be duly administered.”

In current New England practice, the queries are used as tools for personal and corporate spiritual self-reflection. We turn to our advices as a guide to the well-ordered, Spirit-centered life, cherishing the insights of generations of Friends who have come before us. We trust the Spirit to show us how the unchanging principles of truth they contain are to be understood and lived by us in our present situations.

11.06

11.07

11.08

11.09

STORY OF THE ADVICES AND QUERIES:

Section 2

APPENDICES WORKING PAPER

In responding to the questionnaire we sent out in 2002, many asked for more succinct guidance on membership and marriage clearness, travel minutes, recognizing gifts in ministry, and related documents. We responded in 2011 by distributing an Appendices Working Paper. The text included here was revised in December 2013. The topics covered will be treated more comprehensively in chapters now in process; we offer the appendices both as useful guidance now and as a promise for the fuller treatment later.

We ask that you examine and try out the procedures outlined here and let us know what needs to be added or clarified. Please send comments and insights to fandp@neym.org.

Table of Contents

for Appendices Working Paper

The forms in these appendices are templates that monthly meetings may use or modify. They present procedures and suggested practices for topics covered in the body of the book. Some of the chapters to which they refer have yet to be written. We are aware that some of the appendices contain material that more properly belongs in a related chapter. However, we found it important in some appendices to point to the reason behind a given procedure as a reminder of its spiritual foundation.

Thanks to the Faith and Practices of North Pacific and Pacific Yearly Meetings and several monthly meetings for sample forms from which these were copied or developed. These are not intended to be legal forms to fill out, but aids to spiritual discernment.

APPENDIX 1: RECORDS (APPENDICES 1A, 1B, AND 1C TO BE DRAFTED BY NEYM ARCHIVES COMMITTEE)

- 1A. Recommendations for monthly meeting records
- 1B. Recommendations for quarterly meeting records
- 1C. Recommendations for Yearly Meeting records
- 1D. Preparation of monthly meeting minutes

APPENDIX 2: QUAKER ARCHIVES (TO BE DRAFTED BY NEYM ARCHIVES COMMITTEE)

- 2A. Archive deposit form
- 2B. Archive gift form

APPENDIX 3: ESTABLISHING A MONTHLY MEETING

- 3A. Process for recognition as a monthly meeting
- 3B. Questions for a worship group or preparative meeting wishing to become a monthly meeting

APPENDIX 4: MEMBERSHIP

- 4A. Process for joining a Friends meeting
- 4B. Writing a request for membership
- 4C. Suggested topics for the meeting of the applicant and clearness committee the membership
- 4D. Suggested procedure for transfer of membership within the Society of Friends the Society of
- 4E. Forms for transfer of membership within the Society of Friends

4F. Forms for transfer of membership to a church outside the Society of Friends

4G. Sojourning membership

APPENDIX 5: RECOGNITION OF GIFTS AND LEADINGS

5A. Letter of introduction

5B. Minutes for travel under concern or ministry

5C. Denominational endorsement

5D. Released Friend

5E. Recording gifts in ministry

5F. Support and accountability of the gift of vocal ministry

5G. Rescinding recording of the gift

APPENDIX 6: MARRIAGE

6A. Process for marriage under the care of a meeting

6B. Possible questions for the couple before asking the monthly meeting for marriage under its care

6C. Possible questions to be considered by the couple with their marriage clearness committee

6D. Possible questions for the marriage clearness committee to ask itself

6E. Wedding oversight committee checklist

6F. Sample letter of intent to marry

6G. Traditional vows

6H. The marriage certificate

6I. Traditional certificate of marriage

APPENDIX 7: DEATH, DYING AND BEREAVEMENT

7A. Health care decisions and final affairs

7B. Suggested content for final wishes form

7C. Practices at time of death

7D. Planning a memorial meeting

7E. Memorial meeting programs

7F. Memorial minutes

7G. Bequests and estates

7H. Burial grounds

APPENDIX 8: PASTORAL CARE AND CLEARNESS COMMITTEES FOR PERSONAL DISCERNMENT

8A. Advices and queries for pastoral care committees

8B. Guidance for clearness committees for personal discernment

8C. Advices and queries for those asked to serve on clearness committees

APPENDIX 9: STATE LAWS PERTAINING TO FRIENDS IN NEW ENGLAND

APPENDIX 1: RECORDS

1A. Recommendations for Monthly Meeting Records

1B. Recommendations for Quarterly Meeting Records

1C. Recommendations for Yearly Meeting Records

[These three appendices to be drafted by the NEYM Archives and Historical Records Committee]

1D. Preparation of Monthly Meeting Minutes: Some Useful Practices

Expeditious preparation of useful minutes can be aided in many ways. Some suggestions follow.

- 1 The recording and presiding clerks may study the agenda together in advance of the meeting.
 - 2 An effective minute usually consists of three sections: a) reasons for the matter before the meeting; b) decision approved; c) who is responsible for carrying out the decision, including how it is to be financed.
 - 3 A minute may be drafted in advance for on-site editing as discussion of the matter takes place (for example, membership, marriage, matters having clear alternatives).
 - 4 Oral committee reports should be supplemented by a written version and should include draft copies of action minutes.
 - 5 Assign topical identification to sections of minutes and let the minutes of action be serially numbered (e.g., “2011-2-1 Minute on Anti-Muslim Violence”). Both organizing factors facilitate reference in the future.
 - 6 Use care in distributing and filing copies of the minutes to ensure that those given a responsibility in a meeting have a written copy of the decision.
 - 7 To the extent possible, make minutes themselves complete, interpretable without reliance upon attachments (which often go astray).
 - 8 Some monthly meetings approve all the minutes of a meeting at that meeting, and read
-

them at the next meeting for information only. In other meetings, the recording clerk takes notes and prepares minutes later, except for minutes of action whose wording is approved at the time. Those minutes are read for correction and approval at the next monthly meeting.

APPENDIX 3: ESTABLISHING A MONTHLY MEETING

3A. Process for Recognition as a Monthly Meeting

(See NEYM Faith and Practice 1985, p. 219.)

In the context of this appendix, the term “preparative meeting” refers to a group preparing to become a monthly meeting. (See 1985, p. 218, for the two definitions of this term in NEYM.)

- 1 A group meeting regularly for worship asks to become a worship group under the care of an established monthly meeting. At some point the worship group and the monthly meeting may decide to change the status of the worship group to preparative meeting.
- 2 When the monthly meeting feels the preparative meeting is ready for monthly meeting status, it so indicates to the quarterly meeting.
- 3 Quarterly meeting sends a visiting committee to the preparative meeting. That committee then presents a recommendation to the quarterly meeting. If the quarter establishes a new meeting, the action is reported to the yearly meeting.

3B. Questions for a Worship Group or Preparative Meeting Wishing to Become a Monthly Meeting

- 1 What draws your worship group to become a monthly meeting of the Religious Society of Friends? How and in what ways do you feel ready to do so?
- 2 How long has your worship group been meeting? How often do you meet for worship? Where do you meet? Is it in a private home or in rented space? How easy are you to find? How many adults attend? How many children attend? How many of you are Friends? What geographical area does your group include?
- 3 Do you have a sense of God’s presence in your meetings for worship? How will you continue to nurture the worship? How will you nurture spiritual growth in your members and attenders?
- 4 What experience do you have with the Religious Society of Friends outside your worship group—with other monthly meetings, quarterly meetings, yearly meetings?
- 5 How familiar are you with New England Yearly Meeting’s Faith and Practice? Are there other Disciplines (Faith and Practice) with which you are familiar? Which do you rely on for guidance?
- 6 Do you understand the Quaker business process, especially the search for a sense of unity? Do you hold meetings for business? Are they held in a spirit of worship? Do you participate in the meetings for business of the monthly meeting whose care you have been under?

- 7 Do you have sufficient knowledge of Quaker history and Quaker thought to be comfortable

testing leadings within the meeting?

- 8 Does your group embrace traditional Quaker testimonies such as integrity, equality, simplicity, and peace?
- 9 Is your group aware of the spiritual diversity within the various branches of the Religious Society of Friends and within New England Yearly Meeting?
- 10 Would the monthly meeting have a stable enough membership that it may be expected to continue to exist for a substantial period of time?
- 11 Do you have enough members to fulfill the functions of clerk, recording clerk, and major committees? If you do not, as long as you have a clerk you may function as a committee of the whole. Are there enough members with sufficient skill and experience that these responsibilities can be rotated, so that no Friend carries too much of the burden? How will you choose Friends to perform these functions?
- 12 Are you familiar with the process of seeking clearness for membership and for marriage under the care of the Meeting? Once you become a monthly meeting, what will be your guidelines and procedures for those seeking membership and for those seeking to marry under the care of your Meeting?
- 13 Are you familiar with Quaker weddings and Quaker memorial meetings and how they are conducted?
- 14 Are you ready to undertake the financial obligations of a Monthly Meeting? Have you developed a budget?
- 15 Do you understand the process for record-keeping? (See Appendix 1A.) How will you keep monthly meeting minutes and membership records?
- 16 What is your understanding of pastoral care? How will the responsibilities of such care be met?

APPENDIX 4: MEMBERSHIP

(For current practice and appendix, see NEYM Faith and Practice 1985, Part IV, Chapter 2, pp. 235–240 and Appendix 2, pp. 263–264)

4A. Process for Joining a Friends Meeting

- 1 A person desiring membership in a Friends meeting initiates the process by writing a letter to the meeting, addressed to the clerk of the meeting.
- 2 Upon receipt of the letter requesting membership, the clerk refers the letter to the appropriate committee of the meeting, usually ministry and counsel.

- 3 The committee which receives the membership request appoints a clearness committee to meet with the applicant.
- 4 After having met with the applicant as many times as necessary, the clearness committee reports back to this committee.
- 5 If the recommendation is that the applicant be accepted into membership, this recommendation is reported to monthly meeting for business.
- 6 If the clearness committee finds that the applicant is not yet ready for membership, they may choose to extend the process at the applicant's request. Recommendations against acceptance do not need to be reported to the monthly meeting for business.
- 7 If monthly meeting for business accepts the applicant into membership, the action is minuted and the applicant's name is submitted to the meeting recorder and added to the records.
- 8 The new member is then welcomed in whatever fashion the meeting uses.
- 9 The clerk of monthly meeting writes a letter to the new member, acknowledging the action of the monthly meeting for business and welcoming them into membership.

4B. Writing a Request for Membership

The letter requesting membership might include statements of:

- 1 Your desire to become a member.
- 2 How you came to the decision to accept membership.
- 3 Your understanding of the spiritual grounding and aspirations of the Religious Society of Friends now and in the past. (This can be brief.)
- 4 Your willingness to meet with a clearness committee for membership.

4C. Suggested Topics for the Meeting of the Applicant and the Membership Clearness Committee

Below are suggested topics to be addressed. Many of them will occur naturally in the course of conversation and are not meant as an examination, nor is it expected that there are "right" or "wrong" answers. The value of these topics lies in what they may reveal of experiences of the Spirit of both the applicant and the members of the clearness committee. Sufficient time should be allowed to ensure mutual understanding and trust. The discussion should take place unhurriedly in the spirit of a common search and seeking for clearness on the part of both the applicant and the clearness committee.

- 1 ***Spiritual journey.*** Describe your spiritual journey. What is your experience and understanding of the Spirit? What role does it play in your life? How do you anticipate that membership in the meeting and in the Society of Friends will affect this journey?
- 2 ***Quaker history and experience.*** What is your understanding of Quaker history and experience? What is your own experience of following the Inward Light as guide rather

than relying on external authority? Have you found the collective experience and insights of Friends helpful in developing your own understandings?

- 3 ***Quaker testimonies.*** How would you describe Quaker testimonies? Do you find yourself in harmony with them? How has your experience with the testimonies been affected by the meeting's expressions of these testimonies? How has your life been affected by these testimonies?
- 4 ***Quaker beliefs and practices.*** How familiar are you with Friends' beliefs and practices? Are there some which are particularly appealing or applicable to you? Are there some that you find confusing or with which you do not connect?
- 5 ***Contributions to the meeting community.*** How are you involved in the life of the meeting? How do you hope to grow within and contribute to the community? What is your commitment to the meeting community and to the Society of Friends as a whole?
- 6 ***Quaker decision-making.*** Do you understand how Friends make decisions? Have you participated in the monthly meeting for business or served on meeting committees? Are you comfortable with the process of seeking unity in making decisions? Are you prepared to seek clearness for individual leadings through the meeting?
- 7 ***Organizational structure of the Society of Friends.*** Do you understand the relationship between the monthly, quarterly, and yearly meetings? Are you open to participating in them?
- 8 ***Other affiliations.*** Are you affiliated with other religious organizations? How do those affiliations affect your involvement in and commitment to the meeting?
- 9 ***Process of clearness.*** What is your understanding of the process of coming to clearness?
- 10 Are there questions you have for the clearness committee?

4D. Suggested Procedure for Transfer of Membership within the Society of Friends

For the Friend who wishes to transfer membership:

- 1 When a relationship with a new meeting has been established, the Friend desiring to transfer membership applies to the clerk of the meeting of which they are a member for a Certificate of Transfer to the new meeting.
- 2 At the same time, the Friend writes to the clerk of the new meeting indicating that request for transfer has been made.

For the meeting from which transfer is being made:

- 1 Upon the clerk's receipt of a request for a transfer of membership, the clerk refers the request to the appropriate committee of the meeting.

- 2 If there are no obstructions or difficulties, this committee recommends to the monthly meeting that the transfer be approved. If there are problems, this committee will attempt to resolve them or report back to the clerk the circumstances blocking their way.
- 3 Approval by the monthly meeting for business is required for completion of the transfer.
- 4 The clerk or recorder completes two copies of the Certificate of Transfer, sending one to the receiving meeting and keeping one for their own records. (The originating meeting is obligated to inform the receiving meeting of any special condition or problems experienced with a transferring member.)
- 5 The clerk or recorder retains one copy of the Certificate of Transfer.
- 6 If reply from the receiving meeting is not received in due time, another copy of the Certificate of Transfer may be made and inquiry sent to the receiving meeting.
- 7 When the Acceptance of Transfer is returned by the receiving meeting, a copy of the member's meeting membership record is sent to the receiving meeting, thus completing the interchange. The clerk or recorder appends the copy of the Acceptance to the meeting membership record for that member and files those documents in whatever manner the records of "former members" are preserved. The Friend remains a member of the originating meeting until the new meeting has minuted acceptance in their monthly meeting for business. The date of that meeting marks the official change and is so reported to the Yearly Meeting through the annual statistical report.

For the receiving meeting:

- 1 The clerk receives the member's letter of intention to transfer membership. When the Certificate of Transfer and the partially completed Acceptance of Transfer are received, the clerk acknowledges them, in writing, and reports it to the next meeting for business. The clerk then forwards the forms to the appropriate committee.
- 2 This committee appoints a visiting committee, at least one of whom serves on the committee with responsibility for membership. They explore together with the transferring member such matters as are necessary in order that there be common understanding and comfort in the new relationship. If the visiting committee finds clearness, it reports to the appropriate committee, which then makes its recommendations to the next monthly meeting for business.
- 3 When the committee recommends acceptance of the Certificate of Transfer to the monthly meeting for business, and the meeting accepts the recommendation, the meeting minutes its decision regarding the acceptance of the Friend as a member. With acceptance, that minute records membership in the new meeting as of that date. The clerk furnishes the member with a copy of the approving minute.
- 4 The clerk completes the Acceptance of Transfer and makes a copy of it.
- 5 The clerk or recorder sends the copy of the Acceptance of Transfer to the clerk of the member's originating meeting.

- 6 The Certificate of Transfer and the original Acceptance of Transfer become the meeting's membership record. The recorder preserves them in the meeting's file of current members. The meeting will receive a copy of the meeting membership record from the old meeting. This is not an official record and may be stored in whatever manner the meeting holds background information about its members.
- 7 When all business has been satisfactorily completed, the meeting should make arrangements to welcome their new member.
- 8 The new member is included in the meeting's next statistical report.

Note: Meetings vary in how they distribute responsibilities of the clerk and recorder. To avoid unnecessary delay or confusion, each meeting will prosper by clarification of these tasks.

4E. Forms for Transfer of Membership Within the Society of Friends

[Meeting letterhead and date]

To ____ Monthly Meeting of Friends

Dear Friends:

This is to certify that _____, [a member/members] of this Meeting [has/have] requested a certificate transferring membership to your Meeting. Upon due inquiry, no obstruction appears to granting this request. We therefore commend [him/her/them] to your [Christian/spiritual] care. Please acknowledge receipt of this certificate and acceptance of the transfer by completing and returning to the clerk, the annexed statement. Signed by direction and on behalf of ____ Monthly Meeting of Friends, held at _____, State of _____, the ____ day of [month], 20 ____.

_____, Clerk

Address _____.

Acknowledgement:

To ____ Monthly Meeting of Friends

Dear Friends,

We have received the transfer certificate issued by you on the ____ day of [month], 20 ____ and have accepted ____ into membership with us.

Signed by direction and on behalf of ____ Monthly Meeting of Friends, held at _____

_____, State of _____, the ____ day of [month], 20 ____.

_____, Clerk

4F. Transfer of Membership to a Church Outside the Society of Friends

[Meeting letterhead and date]

To the ____ Church, city, state.

Dear Friends,

____, [a member/members] in good standing in this Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends, [has/have] expressed the desire to become [a member/members] of your Church. We have considered this request and there appears to be no obstruction to granting it. We therefore recommend [him/her/them] to your care. Their membership in this meeting of the Religious Society of Friends will end when we receive acknowledgment of your acceptance of this transfer. Signed by direction and on behalf of ____ Monthly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends, held at _____, State of _____, the ____ day of [month], 20 ____.

____, Clerk

Address ____.

Acknowledgement:

To ____ Monthly Meeting of Friends

We have received the letter issued by you on the ____ day of [month], 20 ____, and have accepted ____ into membership with us.

Signed on behalf of ____ Church,

[date] ____

[Signature] ____

[Title] ____

4G. Sojourning Membership

There may be times when a Friend will spend a period of time attending a meeting at some geographical distance from their home meeting, with the intention of ultimately returning to the meeting where they are a member. If the member wants to become involved in the meeting which they are attending, the member may request that their home meeting send a Minute of Sojourn to the meeting with which they want to be involved for the period of their stay. This Minute of Sojourn commends the member to the meeting of their sojourn, asking that they be welcomed into the new community for the duration of their stay.

If the Sojourning Member becomes involved with the new meeting, it is traditional that the Meeting of Sojourn send a letter to the home meeting when the period of sojourn is finished, returning care of the member to the meeting from which they came.

APPENDIX 5: RECOGNITION OF GIFTS AND LEADINGS

5A. Letter of Introduction

(See pp. 264–265 in NEYM Faith and Practice 1985.)

- 1 A Friend planning to visit other Friends meetings may ask the monthly meeting clerk for a letter of introduction, either for a single trip or, in the case of a Friend who travels frequently, for several journeys.
- 2 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.
- 3 A letter of introduction states
 - a. The name of the traveling Friend;
 - b. That the Friend is a member or attender of the meeting providing the letter; and
 - c. The signature of the clerk. More detail may be added.
- 4 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 Ramallah.

In Peace,

_____, Clerk, _____ Monthly Meeting

5B. Minutes for Travel Under Concern or Ministry

(See pp. 264–265 in NEYM Faith and Practice 1985.)

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 to share the concern or ministry. It also provides any pertinent information about the meeting's interest in and support of his/her concern. It may state a specific time for the Friend's travels, or may be written to accompany the Friend for more than one trip.

- 1 The Friend seeking a travel minute requests such from the clerk of ministry and counsel or directly from the monthly meeting clerk, depending on the practice of the particular meeting.
- 2 A clearness process is required; how the clearness committee is formed and by whom varies from meeting to meeting, but it is typically either the ministry and counsel committee or the meeting for business. The clearness committee may report first to ministry and counsel 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 committee or by the meeting clerk. A meeting may provide a travel minute in support of a Friend's concern without having to join in that concern.
- 4 The minute includes:
 - a. The name of the Friend traveling
 - b. An expression of the meeting's endorsement of the travel (as noted above, the meeting might or might not unite with the concern) under concern or in the ministry
 - c. 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 his/her 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 and counsel any pertinent details of visit and any return greetings or information. The minute is returned to the 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, [date].

[Signature], Clerk

(For travel outside the quarter:)

Endorsed by _____ Quarterly Meeting, [date]

[Signature], clerk

(For travel outside NEYM:)

Endorsed by Permanent Board of New England Yearly Meeting, [date]

[Signature], clerk

Sample minute for travel in the ministry

[Meeting letterhead and date]

Dear Friends,

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

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

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

We commit Friend [Name] to your prayerful care and nurture during her time among you.

Approved by _____ Monthly Meeting, [date]

[Signature], clerk

(For travel outside the quarter:)

Endorsed by _____ Quarterly Meeting, [date].

[Signature], clerk

(For travel outside NEYM:)

Endorsed by Permanent Board of New England Yearly Meeting, [date].

[Signature], clerk

Sample endorsement of travel minute from visited meeting

We have been blessed by the presence of [Name] among us. Her message was very moving and inspiring for us.

[Signature], Clerk

Monthly Meeting [date]

5C. Denominational Endorsement

A minute of denominational endorsement is given to an individual seeking professional accreditation for a specific calling; for example, to a Friend who wishes to serve as a hospital chaplain or a pastoral counselor. It affirms the individual's membership in the Religious Society of Friends and that the meeting will assume the necessary oversight 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 clerk or ministry and 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 and 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 An oversight and/or support 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:
 - a. The name of the Friend receiving endorsement;
 - b. A statement that the Friend is a member in good standing;
 - c. An expression of the meeting's endorsement of the specific ministry;

- d. The date and signature of the monthly meeting clerk; and
- e. 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 Mt. Toby Monthly Meeting. We endorse his ministry as a pastoral counselor and have approved an oversight 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 an oversight committee for the Friend receiving endorsement in order to fulfill the requirements of the American Association of Pastoral Counselors.)

5D. Recording Gifts in Ministry

(See pp. 246-247 in NEYM Faith and Practice 1985)

This minute has traditionally been used for Friends who have sustained gifts in vocal ministry. It is an affirmation that the individual is not only locally helpful but also has the ability to interpret the Society of Friends to the wider community.

- 1 Monthly meeting ministry and counsel discerns that a member has a sustained gift in vocal ministry and reports this to the monthly meeting. If monthly meeting approves, ministry and counsel will prepare a minute for the consideration by the quarterly meeting ministry and counsel.
- 2 Quarterly meeting ministry and 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 and counsel. If the committee reports favorably, a recommendation will be brought to the quarterly 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 committee on ministry and counsel together with a copy of the minute.

5 The minute remains in effect for the life of the ministry.

Sample minute of recording

[Meeting letterhead and date]

At ____ Quarterly Meeting held [date] at ____, Friends united in recording [Name] of ____ Monthly Meeting as a minister among Friends. She has shown abundant evidence of a sustained gift in vocal ministry both in her home Meeting as well as in her wide-ranging travels.

APPROVED.

[Signature], clerk

5E. Released Friends

Occasionally a meeting will find among its members a Friend whose specific call would flourish more fully if it had the meeting's prayerful endorsement, support and oversight. A minute of release recognizes that a Friend has a significant leading which the meeting feels called to support in specific ways. This process frees the Friend to pursue the leading and releases them from a variety of other responsibilities within the meeting and, possibly, in other area of their lives; for example, being excused from committee responsibilities within the meeting, or relief from the need to earn a full-time income.

A Friend feeling a clear call to act that requires more than s/he can sustain individually sends a request for release to ministry and counsel or the meeting. An appointed committee will address such questions as:

- 1 Is the calling genuine and clear?
- 2 Does the meeting as a body feel clear that this Friend needs to be released?
- 3 Is the person equipped to carry out the calling?
- 4 In what ways is the Meeting willing and able to support this calling? (This may include financial or other material support.)

Ministry and Counsel or another appropriate committee proposes a minute of release to the monthly meeting. The minute of release includes:

- 1 A description of the leading and work for which the Friend is released
- 2 The time period and review/renewal process for the minute
- 3 What specific resources the meeting will provide, including committees of oversight and/or support and possible financial support

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.

Sample minute of release

[Meeting letterhead and date]

[Name] is an active member of _____ Monthly Meeting. She has shared with us her calling to work with, and on behalf of, those who are victims and survivors of child abuse. Her deep commitment has led her 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 real leading and we release her for this service.

This minute of release will be reviewed in three years.

[Signature], clerk

The full minute of which the minute of release is a part needs to state the responsibilities of the meeting.

Sample detail in full minute

The Committee on Ministry and Counsel will provide several forms of support for her work.

- 1 Appoint a committee of two or three persons to provide spiritual and practical support for [Name], to meet with her during the life of the work.
- 2 Maintain an informed interest in the progress of the work through periodic reports to the committee on Ministry and Counsel.
- 3 Prayerfully consider other forms of support as need may arise.

5F. Support and Accountability of a Gift of Vocal Ministry.

Once an individual Friend has been found to have a gift for vocal ministry, that ministry needs to be supported. 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, it is the meeting's responsibility to support the faithfulness and spiritual health of that Friend. What does that Friend need for preparation, refreshment and eldering? It may take the form of an oversight or support committee that meets regularly with the Friend with the recorded gift, or support may be offered as advice and encouragement from another elder. Discussion may consider the work and service of the individual; queries may be developed by the group, or found elsewhere.

Queries for recorded ministers

- 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 the 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?

Queries for meetings

- 1 Do you as a monthly meeting recognize the interdependence between your meeting and the vitality of the vocal ministry that arises in the meeting?
- 2 Do you regularly inquire about the spiritual condition of your recorded ministers, and all those who offer vocal ministry?
- 3 Do you ask if those recorded as carrying a gift in vocal ministry continue to feel enlivened by, and faithful to the gift?
- 4 Do you offer the support of an oversight committee to nurture and cultivate the gift?
- 5 Do you request regular reporting from the minister about the nature and exercise of the gift?
- 6 Do you regularly ask your ministers what support or oversight they need?

5G. Rescinding Recording of a Gift.

Remember that gifts of the spirit often lie quiescent for a time, only to emerge again with full vigor. But in the case where the minister or the meeting finds that the gift of ministry appears to have been withdrawn, or Friends no longer feel comfortable being represented to the world by that individual, a proposal to rescind the action recording that Friend's gift may be put forward. The proposal originates either in the Ministry and Counsel of the quarterly meeting or in the Ministry and 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 he or she 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 steward his or her own gift of ministry. 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 and 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 and Counsel of the yearly meeting should be notified of the decision to rescind.
- 5 The final action rests with the quarterly meeting.

APPENDIX 6: MARRIAGE

6A. Process for Marriage Under the Care of a Meeting.

(This is an outline of the process described on pages 251–257 of NEYM Faith and Practice 1985.)

- 1 The couple writes a letter of intention to an appropriate meeting.
- 2 The meeting or the responsible committee of the meeting appoints a clearness committee.
- 3 The couple and the clearness committee(s) meet one or more times to discern together whether all are clear that such a marriage would be rightly ordered.
- 4 The clearness committee reports its clarity to ministry and counsel or other responsible committee, which then forwards a recommendation to meeting for business.
- 5 Meeting for business discerns whether or not to take the marriage under its care.
- 6 If the decision is to proceed, the meeting appoints an oversight committee to have care of the wedding on a date set by the couple.
- 7 The couple and the oversight committee make plans and arrangements for the meeting for marriage.

6B. Possible Questions to be Considered by the Couple Before Asking the Monthly Meeting for Marriage Under Its Care

The covenant of marriage is both a joyful and a solemn obligation. Therefore, the couple considering marriage under the care of a Friends' meeting should discuss honestly and frankly with each other the commitments and responsibilities assumed in marriage and in establishing a home. The questions that follow have no “right” answers, but are intended as aids to spiritual discernment.

Each question is here because someone found it useful. There may be questions that one of you shies away from or that makes one of you uncomfortable. If there is a worry or a discomfort that you have been pushing away, now is the time to look at it. It is the unrecognized issues that most often cause problems. Try to take enough time to allow yourselves to enjoy addressing these questions together.

Spiritual relationships

- 1 What part do our spiritual lives play in our relationship? How do we show understanding and sympathy for one another's religious convictions? Have we discussed the role they will have in our life together?
- 2 Do we seek God's guidance in our lives together? Are we open enough to God's guidance and to each other to face in love those things that divide us? Do we pray

together?

- 3 Have we considered the possibility that one of us may receive a leading that takes us away from family, puts us in harm's way, or causes financial strain? Are we open to seeking divine guidance in such situations?
- 4 How will we make marriage a sacred and lifelong relationship?
- 5 Is our relationship part of the religious community to which we belong? How do we expect our relationship with the meeting to affect our lives as a couple?
- 6 Do we expect our relationship to support the life of the meeting? How might the meeting support our marriage in the years to come? How might our support of the meeting change?
- 7 Why do we want to be married? What do we hope the commitment of marriage will bring to our relationship?
- 8 Are we seeking a spiritual union, a legal union, or both? If we cannot have or do not want a legally recognized union, are we aware of the many legal contracts which can be drawn up to provide rights similar to those that are part of a legally recognized union?

Family Life

- 9 Have we considered traditional roles in marriage, our attitudes toward them and toward modern variations? Are we aware that one can impose a role expectation on another without being aware of it? What expectations do each of us have about each other's roles within the marriage? How might these change as time goes along?
- 10 Do we know each other's habits, likes, and dislikes? Are we ready to make adjustments in our personal lives to meet each other's needs with kindness and understanding?
- 11 Do we share interests we can enjoy together? How do we show respect for each other's individual interests? What dreams do we have? What dreams do we share?
- 12 Do we have the willingness to listen and to be open and honest in our communication with one another, especially at times of unexpected life changes? Can we bear the consequences together of such changes? Have we discussed aging and the changes it will bring?
- 13 How does our spiritual experience influence our perception of sexuality? What helps us to understand sexuality and spirituality as related parts of a single wholeness? Do we understand each other's attitudes towards fidelity and faithfulness?
- 14 Have we discussed continuing friendships outside of our marriage? Do either of us have emotional or other commitments to a third person which would interfere with our marriage?
- 15 Do we share each other's attitudes on earning, spending and saving money, and the handling of finances? Will we share responsibility for our routine financial maintenance?

- 16 Have we discussed whether either or both of us will change our names and have we discussed what last name any children will have?
- 17 What are sources of potential conflicts between us? When conflicts arise, what tools do we have to deal with them?
- 18 Have we explored our attitudes and visions for family life including: Do we want children? If so, how many? How soon? Might we consider adoption or foster care?
- 19 If either of us has children, what might be the impact of this marriage on t h e m and of them on our marriage? How will we incorporate the children and spouse of a previous marriage into the new marriage?
- 20 How we will raise, discipline, and educate our children?
- 21 How will caring for children impact our jobs and our careers? How will we share family responsibilities?
- 22 How might our family reflect Friends' testimony of simplicity and concerns for the environment and world population?
- 23 What is our family's relationship to our extended families and to the meeting?

Family Backgrounds

- 24 How do we feel about each other's economic, cultural, and religious backgrounds? How do our family backgrounds affect how we feel about marriage and having a family? How do our families feel about our marriage? How does this impact us as individuals and as a couple?
- 25 How do we react to each other's parents, friends, and relatives?
- 26 How do we intend to keep close relationships with family who may live far away (especially in cases of illness or old age)?

Concluding Questions

- 27 Do we know each other well enough to have considered all of the above questions frankly, openly, and without hurry? If not, should we wait—six months, a year—before proceeding with marriage?
- 28 Why are we asking for clearness and oversight of the meeting? Are we aware that marriage under the care of the meeting draws the marriage into the spiritual life of the meeting? Do we welcome this added communal aspect of our marriage?
- 29 How significant to us are the sacred promises made in the presence of our family and friends during the meeting for marriage?

6C. Possible Questions to be Considered by the Couple with Their Marriage Clearness Committee

- 1 Why do you want to be married?
- 2 Why do you want to be married “under the care of the meeting”?
- 3 What do you expect your relationship as a married couple to be with the meeting?
- 4 How well do you know each other?
- 5 Are you free enough from prior relationships to enter fully into this marriage?
- 6 How will you bring children from a prior marriage into this marriage?
- 7 Have you shared enough information about your past and your present situation to enter into your marriage with integrity?
- 8 How are you building the foundation of strength which will support you as you deal with the inevitable changes and difficulties you will experience as a couple?
- 9 Which of the queries you considered together prompted the richest sharing? Which prompted the most discomfort?
- 10 Have you considered what vows you will exchange? Have you considered what your meeting means by the “dignity, reverence, and simplicity” of a Quaker wedding?

6D. Possible Questions for the Marriage Clearness Committee to Ask Itself

- 1 Are these two people joined in a spiritual union?
- 2 Does the couple understand the implications of their wedding and their marriage being under the care of the meeting?
- 3 Are there any obstacles to this couple marrying? Is there a role for this committee in addressing them?

6E. Wedding Oversight Committee Checklist

- 1 Meet with the couple to discuss plans for the wedding and to discuss plans for the rehearsal. Include choice of individuals to open the worship, to read the certificate, and to close the meeting.
- 2 Review the vows with the couple. See that the marriage (and reception, if any) is accomplished with dignity, reverence, and simplicity according to the practices of the monthly meeting.
- 3 Arrange for the care of the certificate following the meeting for worship and see that it is signed by all who are present as witnesses.
- 4 See in advance that all applicable legal requirements have been met and that the proper license has been obtained.
- 5 See that all necessary signatures are obtained for the license and that it is filed in accordance with state law.

- 6 Deliver the certificate to the recording clerk for copying or duplication for the records of the monthly meeting and give the recording clerk an address to which the certificate is to be returned.
- 7 Report to the monthly meeting whether the marriage has been suitably accomplished, whether the applicable legal requirements have been satisfied, whether the certificate has been properly recorded, and to report any name changes that result from the marriage for recording in the minutes of the monthly meeting, for the quarterly meeting, and for the yearly meeting.

6F. Sample Letter of Intent to Marry

To the Monthly Meeting.

Trusting in God's guidance and the approval of Friends, we intend marriage with each other. We should like to be married under the care of ____ Monthly Meeting.

[Signed] A.B.

[Signed] F.E.

6G. Traditional Vows

(Below is a traditional vow. Any changes the couple wishes to make should be reviewed with the marriage clearness committee.)

In the presence of God and before these friends, I take thee, [Name], to be my [husband/wife/spouse/partner], promising, with Divine assistance, to be unto thee a loving and faithful [wife/husband/spouse/partner] as long as we both shall live.

6H. The Marriage Certificate

The certificate needs to include:

- 1 Names of the individuals being married,
- 2 Date and location of the wedding,
- 3 Meeting under whose care it is occurring,
- 4 Substance of the vows, and
- 5 Space for signatures of the couple, pastor officiating (if appropriate), and of those attending.

Sufficient identification should be used to unambiguously identify the couple and the meeting.

6I. Traditional Certificate of Marriage

(Below is a traditional certificate. Any changes the couple wishes to make should be reviewed with the marriage clearness committee.)

Whereas A.B., of [city or town], County of [county], and State of [state], son of C.B., and E.D. of [city or town], and F.E., of [city or town], County of [county] and State of [state], daughter of H. and K.E. of [city or town], having declared their intentions of marriage with each other to [monthly meeting name] of the Religious Society of Friends held at [city or town], [state], according to the good order used among them, their proposed marriage was allowed by that Meeting.

NOW THESE ARE TO CERTIFY that for the accomplishment of their marriage, this [day in words] day of the [word for month number] month, in the year [year in words] they, the said A.B. and F.E., appeared in a duly appointed meeting held at [city or town], [state], under the oversight of [monthly meeting name] of the Religious Society of Friends. Taking one another by the hand, A.B. and F.E. did on this solemn occasion declare that they took each other as [wife/husband/spouse/partner], promising, with divine assistance, to be unto each other loving and faithful [wife/husband/spouse/partner] as long as they both should live.

And in further confirmation thereof, they, the said A.B. and F.E., [taking the surname of G*] did then and there to these presents set their hands.

_____ A.B.[G*] _____ F.E.[G*]

AND WE, having been present at the solemnization of the said marriage, have as witnesses thereto, set our hands.

[Witness]

[Witness]

[Witness]

**Couples vary widely in the names that they take after they are wedded. In all cases their signatures on this certificate are the first place that their married names are used, these signatures being their final step in their wedding. It can be helpful to state the change(s) being made in the preceding paragraph.*

APPENDIX 7: DEATH, DYING AND BEREAVEMENT

7A. Health Care Decisions and Final Affairs

Friends are strongly advised to make their final arrangements well in advance, remembering that death does not always wait until we are old.

Make sure those close to you know where to find the information.

Meetings can help by having packets of the necessary forms available, periodically encouraging Friends to fill them out and, if desired, providing a lockbox at the meetinghouse in which to keep copies of completed forms.

Friends are encouraged to fill out the following forms:

- 1 A Health Care Advance Directive form. These are available online for each state or from your local hospital.

- 2 A Will or Trust. This is especially important where provision needs to be made for minor children and also for couples who are not legally married.
- 3 A form with your vital statistics which will be needed at the time of your death. Such forms can be obtained from Funeral Consumer's Alliance or a variety of online sources. Some meetings have developed their own. (See Appendix 7B.)

7B. Suggested Content for Final Wishes Form

Personal Data: Name, address, telephone number, date and place of birth, Social Security number, location of will/trust/bequest, name, address, and telephone number of executor of will/trust.

Making Contacts: List key persons who would be willing to notify networks of other people, such as an immediate family member, a professional colleague, a close friend, etc.

Instructions for Final Arrangements

Funeral Director:

Does your state require you to use a funeral director?

If you need or choose to have a professional funeral director involved, indicate the name, address and phone number.

Have you talked with this funeral director?

Consider what your wishes are for disposal of your body or ashes:

Would you prefer burial or cremation?

If you choose burial:

What kind of coffin? There are many alternatives to choose from. You may wish to purchase your own ahead of time.

Do you have a particular cemetery in mind? Many states have green cemeteries you may wish to investigate

Do you wish to be embalmed? This is not legally required.

If you choose cremation:

Do you have a particular vessel you would like to use for containment of your ashes?

Would you like your ashes scattered in a particular place? Is this a legal possibility?

A funeral director can handle the cremation, or the family may make arrangements to transport the body personally.

Memorial Service or Funeral:

Do you have a preferred location?

Is there someone you would like to officiate? Is there music you would like?

Do you want to have flowers?

Who should be notified, near and far?

Do you have any other specific instructions?

Charitable Donations: Provide names and addresses of organization(s) you wish to receive memorial donations in your name.

Obituary: You may wish to write this yourself, or choose someone else to do it. Who has information about your life?

Care of Minor Children:

Note the names and phone numbers of those you have chosen to take responsibility for immediate and long-term care of minor children.

Other instructions concerning their care.

Pets: Give the name and phone number of whomever will provide care for your pets.

The more details written down ahead of time, the more easily survivors can act upon your wishes. Do not hesitate to add details to the ones suggested above.

Basic Information Which May Be Needed

- **Terminal Care Documents (Advance Directives or Living Will):** Are these current and up to date? With whom have you discussed your wishes?
- **Will or Trust information:** List the names and phone numbers of those who have any written documents, and where the documents are kept.
- **Organ Donation:** Since this needs to be acted on very soon after death, it is helpful for many people to know your wishes ahead of time so those present can act promptly, especially if your death does not occur in a hospital. Have you filled out an organ donation card? Where is this located?
- **Durable Power of Attorney for Health Care (DPA/HC):** Write down the name, address, and phone number of whoever has DPA/HC for you, and where the document is kept.
- **Durable Power of Attorney for Your Estate:** Name, address, and phone number
- **Bank Accounts:** Location of bank books, location of banks, and phone numbers
- **Credit Cards:** Bank name, account number, card location, phone number
- **Safe Deposit Box:** Location of box, location of key

- Annuities, Life Insurance Policies: Location of these documents, name and phone number of representative or agent to contact

7C. Practices at the Time of Death

When a death occurs in the meeting community, Friends should assist the family in whatever ways may be needed, such as help with children, with food or housework, or with hospitality for visiting relatives. When prior planning has not been done, the meeting may be asked to assist a family in making decisions regarding disposition of their loved one's body and, if there is no family, consider doing this service for the deceased Friend.

When choosing an alternative to the services of a professional funeral director (in states where this is legal) it is very helpful to have the support and assistance of one's community.

Meetings may appoint a burial committee to assist Friends in simple burial practices. This committee would carefully research the legal requirements, which vary from state to state, and assist families in filing appropriate paperwork. Information needed can be obtained through Funeral Consumer's Alliance. A home funeral guide for congregations and communities, *Undertaken with Love*, is available online as a free, downloadable PDF pamphlet.

7D. Planning a Memorial Meeting

A memorial meeting is a meeting for worship celebrating a deceased Friend's life. It is usually arranged by members of ministry and counsel and/or the meeting's pastor, in consultation with the family and in accord with any wishes recorded by the Friend. Meetings or their pastors may be asked to provide this service for people who are not part of the meeting community, and need to be clear how to respond to this request.

In an unprogrammed meeting, a designated Friend is appointed to briefly explain how the meeting will be conducted and to invite participation of the worshipers. This Friend may begin the meeting with some information about the deceased's life. A memorial meeting in the programmed tradition will generally include readings, prayers, and music in addition to the time of waiting worship. Below are lists of considerations when planning a memorial meeting. Meetings are advised to consider what they can reasonably offer before making a commitment to a bereaved family.

The Memorial Meeting:

Are there any particular wishes for readings, music, musicians, particular persons to speak, etc.? Usually someone from the meeting will be designated to open and close the meeting.

- A printed program: Ascertain whether or not the family would like a printed program and what their estimate is of the number needed. Are there special quotations or pictures to include? Would the family like the meeting to handle this or would they prefer to do it themselves?
- Refreshments: Meetings may wish to develop a protocol for dealing with this.
- What can the meeting reasonably provide? Often the refreshments are provided jointly by the meeting and family members of the deceased.

- Guest book: Does the family wish to provide one or would they like the meeting to provide it?
- Child care during the memorial service: Is the meeting able to provide child care should it be needed?
- Memorial display: Would the family like to have a display of mementos, photos, etc?
- Overnight hospitality needs: Is the meeting able to offer hospitality if it is needed?
- Logistical responsibilities: Confirm the chosen date and time with your meeting's scheduler and make sure arrangements have been made as needed for cleaning, opening and closing the meetinghouse, snowplowing, flowers, catering, and setup people.
- Assign Friends to serve as greeters, as well as one to answer the telephone, and one to act as a guide if there are special issues around parking.

7E. Memorial Meeting Programs

In addition to the person's name, birth, and death dates, and the location and date of the memorial meeting, the program may include some facts about the person's life and/or a photo, picture, or favorite text. In the unprogrammed tradition something like the following may be added:

A Memorial Service in the Manner of Friends

On the occasion of a death, Friends hold a meeting for worship. The Memorial Meeting is a time for sharing loss and also a time of thankfulness for the life of the person for whom the memorial meeting is held. Laughter and tears are both appropriate. We reflect on the value of that life as it relates to the lives of all of us.

All present share equally in this meeting. We sit quietly; at times an individual may be moved to speak, to offer prayer or a message that has come out of the silence. All are welcome to do this. Those who keep silence, as well as those who give a vocal message, participate in worship when they yield their minds and hearts to the guidance of the Spirit. Friends find that the worship is deepened by allowing silence to follow the spoken words. The meeting closes when a designated Friend offers a hand to a neighbor. This will signal all present to shake hands and greet one another.

In the programmed tradition an order of service may follow including such elements as greeting and gathering words, readings, music, prayers, scriptures, overview of the deceased friend's life, waiting worship, and parting words. The meeting's pastor or other designated Friend will generally open and close the meeting and offer words of transition between each element of the service.

7F. Memorial Minutes

(See NEYM Faith and Practice 1985, p. 245.)

Writing a memorial minute

The process of writing a memorial minute starts in the monthly meeting ministry and counsel. The committee may choose other members of the meeting to do the writing, but ministry and counsel should read the minute before it is presented to meeting for business.

Purposes of the memorial minute:

- To let Friends know the person memorialized, to help Friends benefit from the spiritual lessons of the life memorialized.
- To comfort the bereaved family and the meeting by honoring their beloved Friend.
- To give thanks to God for Grace as expressed in the Friend's life.

Some Do's and Don'ts for Memorial Minute Authors

DON'T

- Polish the life and hold up the person as a shining example.
- Include information just because it's factual. "Served on Permanent Board, the Yearly Meeting Finance Committee, and as Reading Clerk" needs context to inform us.

DO

- Remember that memorial minutes require a tender sensitivity as well as a disciplined focus.
- Give clearly and succinctly the flavor of the life as well as illustration of how the person's qualities and achievements were demonstrated in his/her life among Friends. Go far: failings, weaknesses, needs, are part of Friends gifts to us. Remember: "the general killeth, the particular giveth life"; that's where dates and places can help. "She used her skills as a lifeguard to serve Young Friends" is very weak, compared to "for the opening sessions of the newly united New England Yearly Meeting at Andover Academy in Massachusetts in 1945, Ginny was the Senior Red Cross lifeguard for the Young Friends at their swimming beach."

Consider the following queries:

- How does the inclusion of this information in the memorial minute reflect the movement of the spirit in this Friend's life?
- What gifts of the spirit did this Friend bring to the meeting?
- How did this Friend's service in the Yearly Meeting reveal the light within and/or the light in others? When we consider our spiritual journeys what part did this Friend play in them?
- Are there meetings, institutions or individuals in the Yearly Meeting who might be able to share with us ways in which this Friend exemplified testimonies which may not have been foremost in interactions at our meeting?

Before writing a memorial minute, line up resources:

- Talk to people in the monthly meeting and other local meetings.

- Call the Yearly Meeting office and ask how this Friend served the Yearly Meeting.
- If this Friend is a transfer, ask prior meetings.
- Talk to family.

Work as led. Trust that the Spirit will guide the authors to know what to include or omit and how to present facts so that truth is served.

Allow time for ministry and counsel to season the work before presenting the memorial minute to monthly meeting for approval.

Expect changes. The monthly meeting is likely to ask for changes. Try to be grateful for their interest.

Approved by Permanent Board January 2008

Forwarding memorial minutes

Approval of a memorial minute in monthly meeting will include a decision on where to forward it. All memorial minutes may be forwarded to the quarterly meeting for its inspiration. However, if the Friend was active in the Yearly Meeting, the minute will be forwarded to quarterly meeting with a recommendation to forward it to the Permanent Board.

7G. Bequests and Estates

When bequests are made to a Quaker institution, the interests and intentions of a donor should be expressed in broad terms. A bequest should contain the fewest possible legally binding restrictions, with preferences being expressed in terms of guidance. Detailed preferences as to the administration and use of

funds are likely to be more appropriate for a supplemental letter than for the bequest itself.

Even though the donor's wishes are stated as a matter of preference rather than as a legally binding restriction, the meeting, in accepting a bequest, feels a moral obligation to comply with those wishes as far as, and as long as, it is possible to do so.

If a preference is indicated in connection with a gift that the principal is to be invested and only the current income expended, it is reasonable to expect that this will be done for a number of years to come. Nevertheless the present members of the meeting do not wish to tie the hands of their successors. It is therefore expected that after a designated number of years (maybe 15) that part of the principal of a gift might be used in addition to income. In like manner any physical property given to the meeting would be subject to examination to determine whether its continued use as originally designated is compatible with current program and conditions.

The meeting recognizes that the ways in which capital funds are invested often have important implications in terms of Friends' testimonies and concerns. It is expected that Friends will, on the one hand, avoid certain types of investment regardless of the expected rate of monetary return and will, on the other hand, have liberty to make some other investments involving a somewhat lower monetary return or a greater monetary risk than would be considered acceptable in a secular organization.

In American society it has become common for educational buildings, philanthropic funds, and the like, to carry the name of a donor or of a person or family being memorialized. The meeting hopes that bequests, while letting such an interest be known, will leave final decisions to the judgment of the meeting.

If a bequest is offered with terms plainly out of harmony with the spirit and intent of the meeting's policy and without special extenuating circumstances, the trustees are directed to notify the executor that the bequest cannot be accepted.

7H. Burial Grounds

Meetings maintaining their own burial grounds should establish rules and regulations governing interments, the marking of graves, and keeping of records. The meeting should appoint a committee of two or more Friends to have oversight of the burial grounds and to see to the enforcement of the rules. The committee should take care to make no commitment of a plot or reservation of space in the burial ground which, in the passage of time, may permit the plot to pass from meeting control or ownership.

In cases where the maintenance of a burial ground no longer in use has proved burdensome to the meeting, the possibility of turning it over to the care of others may be considered, with due regard to the use to which the ground would be put.

In establishing regulations as to grave markers, meetings should be careful to observe the principles of moderation and simplicity. Meetings without burial grounds may wish to create and maintain gardens of remembrance where members' ashes may be scattered.

APPENDIX 8: PASTORAL CARE AND CLARNESS COMMITTEES FOR PERSONAL DISCERNMENT

8A. Advices and Queries for Pastoral Care Committees

Advices

- 1 As a meeting, we accept a degree of responsibility and concern for one another. We would not wish to turn aside from one another in times of need.
- 2 As members of pastoral care committees we wish to ensure that each member of our community is able to draw upon the meeting's care and concern. Useful ways to give support will necessarily vary from one situation to another. As we offer help we strive to be sensitive to one another's spiritual, emotional, and material condition, and to the need of each of us to maintain our personal dignity and protect our privacy.
- 3 Pastoral care committees should seek not to act beyond their competence or beyond the limits of their proper responsibility. Clear discernment of proper responsibility comes when caring arises from the heart of compassion and when people are held firmly in the light.
- 4 Our feelings and motivations necessarily color our decisions and discussions about individuals. We need to be especially aware of our feelings about a person and that these

may overcome our ability to discern God's will. We should be prayerful in maintaining this awareness and, as necessary, remaining silent in our meetings.

Queries

- 1 Do we reach out to ensure that contact is maintained with all of our Meeting community? Do we make clear that we are available to offer mutual support—spiritual, emotional, and material? Are all encouraged to seek and accept the support of the Meeting?
- 2 Do we take care that each member of our community is held in sensitive awareness, with respect for personal dignity and privacy? Are we tender of one another's feelings? Do we maintain confidentiality, avoid gossip, and refrain from unnecessary and inappropriate exchange of information?
- 3 As we offer pastoral care, do we each maintain awareness of our own needs and motivations and the effect these may have on our own care-giving? Are we careful to distinguish personal feelings about individuals—positive or negative—from our charge to care for them? In striving to help others, do we seek the Spirit through prayer and silence?
- 4 Are we sensitive to the limits of our capacities and the limits of our responsibilities? Are we prepared to express these limits and recommend professional resources?
- 5 Do we remember to faithfully hold in prayer those to whom we offer care? Do we as members of pastoral care committees hold ourselves mutually accountable to the spirit of these queries?

8B. Guidance for a Clearness Committee for Personal Discernment

A clearness committee meets with a person who is unclear how to proceed in a keenly felt concern or dilemma, hoping that it can help this person reach clarity. It assumes that each of us has an Inner Teacher who can guide us and that the answer sought can be found by the person seeking clearness. It also assumes that a group of caring friends can help 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 or judgments, to help clarify alternatives, to help communication if necessary, and to provide emotional support as an individual seeks to find "truth and the right course of action." The clearness committee works best when everyone approaches it in a prayerful mood (which does not exclude playful!).

Organizing the clearness committee

- 1 The person seeking clearness always initiates formation of the committee, though a friend may ask, "Would a clearness committee be helpful?" The focus person may choose several trusted friends or ask ministry and counsel (worship and ministry, or pastoral care) to form a clearness committee for them. In either case, formation of the committee should happen through a discernment process, taking care to have variety among its appointed members.
- 2 In advance of the meeting, it is helpful for the focus person to write up the matter on which clearness is sought, identifying it as precisely as possible, giving relevant background factors

and any clues there may be to what lies ahead. This should be made available to committee members. This exercise is valuable not only for the committee members, but especially for the focus person.

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

Conducting the clearness committee

- 1 The clerk invites the committee to prepare for its work, 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.
- 3 When the focus person is ready, s/he begins with a brief summary of the question or concern.
- 4 Members of the committee hold to a discipline of asking brief, probing question as led by the Spirit, resisting urges to present solutions or give advice. It is crucial that these questions be asked not for the sake of satisfying the questioner's curiosity, but for the sake of drawing out the focus person's clarity. The pace of questions should be kept deliberately gentle and relaxed to encourage reflection. Committee members should also trust their intuitions. Even if a question seems "off the wall," if it feels insistent it should be asked.
- 5 The focus person normally answers the questions in front of the group and the response generates more questions. It is always the focus person's absolute right not to answer, whether because s/he does not know the answer, or because the answer is too personal or painful to be revealed in the group. The more often a focus person can answer aloud, the more s/he and the committee has to go on, but this should never be done at the expense of the focus person's privacy or need to protect vulnerable feelings. It is a good idea for the focus person to keep answers fairly brief so that time remains for more questions and responses.
- 6 Do not be anxious if there are extended periods of silence. It does not mean that nothing is happening; in fact, the Spirit may be powerfully at work within the focus person and the committee members.
- 7 Well before the end of the session, following at least half an hour of questions and answers, the clerk pauses to ask the focus person how s/he wishes to proceed. This is an opportunity for the focus person to choose, if it feels appropriate, a mode of seeking clarity other than questions. The recorder continues to record during this time. Possibilities include:
 - a. Silence out of which anyone may speak under the same discipline as in other meetings for worship
 - b. Silence out of which people share images which come to them as they

concentrate on the focus person

c. Continued questions from the committee

d. Reflection on what has been said

e. Affirmation of the focus person's gifts

f. Questions to the committee from the focus person

- 8 Before the session ends the focus person may wish to share any clarity which has come to them. S/he and the committee consider together whether another meeting is needed and, if so, schedule it at this time. It may be that the focus person will not need to meet with the committee again or it may be clear that a support or oversight committee should be appointed to help the person remain clear and/or be accountable to the clarity reached. Members of the clearness committee are free to release themselves from further commitment or to offer to serve on such committees.

(excerpted from a 1996 brochure by Jan Hoffman)

8C. Queries and Advices for Those Asked to Serve on Clearness Committees

Queries

- 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 and many weeks or months to clarify the problem and provide support while the decision is made and carried out?
- 3 Do you feel sufficiently at ease with the focus person 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 it is a decision to be made by more than one person, can you set aside your own prejudice or bias as you listen to each person involved?
- 5 Are you willing to keep the committee discussions confidential and avoid gossiping or referring to them outside the committee unless those requesting the help of the committee are comfortable with a wider sharing of their problem?
- 6 Can you keep an open heart and an open mind about the outcome?

Advices

- 1 While the convener takes care of the practical details of setting up the meeting and keeps a sense of right order while it is in progress, 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. It is not an occasion to provide counseling but a spiritual exercise which aims to help the focus person or people 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 If the meeting is for more than one person, try to give equal attention to each person present, whether adult or child.
- 3 Remember that people are capable of change and growth. Do not become absorbed with past excuses or reasons for present problems. Focus on what is happening now that is perpetuating the situation or causing the need for a decision to be made.

APPENDIX 9: STATE LAWS PERTAINING TO FRIENDS IN NEW ENGLAND

(See p. 261 in NEYM Faith and Practice 1985)

[NOTE: Any statutes added since the 1985 F&P were located by searching for “church” or “religious”.]

There are several areas of law which might be of importance to Friends:

Laws pertaining to the incorporation of New England Yearly Meeting;

Laws pertaining to the incorporation of monthly meetings;

Laws pertaining to churches, church government, religious societies in general, or in some states “non-business” corporations;

Laws pertaining to property tax exemption;

Laws pertaining to military exemption;

Laws pertaining to Friends’ manner of marriage;

Laws pertaining to oaths/affirmations;

Laws pertaining to records (minutes, letters, etc.).

CONNECTICUT

Connecticut General Statutes Annotated:

<http://www.cga.ct.gov/asp/menu/statutes.asp>

Title 33 Chapter 598 Sections 243-264 (Corporations)

Title 12 Chapter 203 Section 81 (Property Tax Exemption)

Title 46b Chapter 815e Section 22 (Marriage)

Title 1 Chapter 4 Section 23 (Oaths)

MAINE

Maine Revised Statutes Annotated:

<http://www.mainelegislature.org/legis/statutes>

Title 13 Chapter 93 Section 2986 (corporations)

Title 36 Chapter 105 Section 652 (property tax exemption)

Title 19A Chapter 23 Section 658 (marriage)

Title 1 Section 72 (1A) (definition of affirmations and oaths)

Title 32 Chapter 19 Section 13856 (counseling professionals)

Title 22 Chapter 1071 Section 4011-A (required reporting of suspected abuse or neglect)

MASSACHUSETTS

Massachusetts General Laws Annotated:

<http://www.malegislature.gov/Laws/GeneralLaws/Search>

Chapter 68 Sections 10 (Overseers or trustees of monthly meeting of Quakers as corporation), and 11 (Monthly meeting of Quakers; appointment of trustees; powers and duties)

Chapters 67 (Parishes and Religious Societies) & 68 (Donations and Conveyances for Pious and Charitable Uses)

Chapter 59 Section 5 (property tax exemptions)

Chapter 207 Sections 38, 40, 42 (marriage)

Chapter 233 Section 17 (affirmation by Quakers in place of oath)

Chapter 66 Section 16 (surrender of church records)

Chapter 199 Section 21 (protection of children)

Chapter 64H Section 6 (certain exemptions from sales tax)

Chapter 114 (cemeteries and burials)

NEW HAMPSHIRE

New Hampshire Revised Statutes Annotated:

<http://www.gencourt.state.nh.us/rsa/html/indexes/default.html>

Chapter 306, Section 11 (financial committee of Quakers as corporate body)

Chapters 306 (Religious Societies Generally), 307 (Sale, Repairs, Etc., of Meetinghouses), 308 (Dissolution)

Chapter 72 Section 23 (tax exemptions)

Chapter 457 (Marriage) Section 37 (Affirmation of Freedom of Religion in Marriage)

Chapter 289 (cemeteries)

Constitution Part 2 Article 84 and Chapter 21 Section 24 (affirmations by Quakers)

RHODE ISLAND

General Laws of Rhode Island:

<http://www.rilin.state.ri.us/statutes/>

Title 7, Chapter 7-6 (non-profit corporations)

Title 44, Chapter 44-3, Section 44-3-3 (property tax exemption)

Title 15, Chapter 15-3, Section 15-3-6 (marriage)

Title 43, Chapter 43-3, Section 43-3-11 (oaths and affirmations)

Title 23, Chapter 23-18 (cemeteries)

VERMONT

Vermont Statutes Annotated:

<http://www.leg.state.vt.us/statutesmain.cfm>

Title 11, Chapter 13 (Religious Societies)

Title 32, Chapter 125, Sections 3802, 3832 (exemption from taxation)

Title 18, Chapter 105 (marriage); Chapter 106 (civil unions); Chapter 121 (cemeteries)

Title 12, Chapter 211, Section 5851 (affirmation/oaths)

Section 3

A PECULIAR PEOPLE AND

MOVING FORWARD TO THE REMAINING CHAPTERS: THE INTEGRATION OF FAITH AND LIFE

In 2003 the Faith and Practice Revision Committee wrote and distributed “A Peculiar People” as “a window for the Yearly Meeting into the work we are doing.” We hoped it would describe the unity of faith and life we wanted to convey in the revision. Eleven years later, we have been asked to consider including it somehow in the book and we welcome your reflections on this idea. Send your thoughts to fandp@neym.org.

In 2013 we articulated the seed of a new approach to the rest of the book in our document “Travels with Testimonies.” After further discernment this year, in June 2014 the Committee approved “Moving Forward to the Remaining Chapters: The Integration of Faith and Life” to articulate how we hope to proceed.

THE THREE-PART DANCE:

*Centered through stillness,
In Spirit gathered
Do we dare reflect the Light?*

Friends: A people called to listen, gathered to seek, sent forth to serve.

Friends World Committee for Consultation
Triennial theme, 2000

I. Our ultimate authority is the grace of God as inwardly experienced

Centered through stillness, A people called to listen ...
*In Spirit gathered
Do we dare reflect the Light?*

At our best, Friends live according to inner, rather than outward, promptings. The Inward Teacher is experienced as full of grace, eternal, not belonging to the self but entirely at the self's center. This inner voice is the basis of our spiritual being and how we discern our values. No outside authority, be it church, government, employer, or family, speaks to us with the same authority or power.

Friends often speak of “the Inner Light,” which we understand to be Divine. We name this Seed in many ways. Whatever name we use, we are clear that each person can live in a direct relationship with the Divine. We experience a divine Spark that unites us with all of creation.

Our faith is not dependent on outward forms, but rather on the transformation of our hearts and minds in order to conform to Divine will. Our best witness is an outward expression of that inward transformation, which occurs through grace. Friends' tradition is a way of knowing God that is deeply rooted in the life of the Spirit that we know and name in inclusive ways, such as the Christ, the Seed, the Light. It is a deeply rooted tree, drawing its sustenance from that Spirit and able to sway in the heavy winds of real life.

Friends' understanding of baptism and communion is based on our faith that God/Jesus/the Holy Spirit can be alive and present with us at any moment. So when we experience a “covered” meeting, we have experienced communion—a deep connection with each other and with God. This is not a choice, as water baptism can be, but a matter of grace. Our practice of expectant waiting, in faith that we will come to know the Spirit, does make us peculiar in this fast-paced culture.

Quakers are “peculiar,” both within the Christian tradition and beyond it, in that we do not base our religion on a system of outward requirements (either of belief or behavior) or rewards (either in this world or the next). Quakerism invites much freedom for personal spiritual inquiry and guidance. This suggests a basic optimism about the goodness of life and belief in God's availability to teach, to comfort, and to minister to each person directly. Central to this experience is a

willingness to be transformed, not just once but over and over. That means a willingness to test ideas and processes. It also means living as pilgrims, always seeking new openings.

As pilgrims ourselves, our meetings are open to others who seek. We do not profess what we have not experienced, nor do we ask anyone else to profess what he or she has not experienced. But we need to name experiences of the Divine in others and in ourselves. We affirm that ours is a community that provides an opportunity to seek, and indeed rejoices when people affirm, “This I know from my own experience!”

Friends place authority in the living Spirit of God. To know if they are authentic, we test individual leadings of the Spirit through the discernment and prayer of our meetings. Authentic authority among Friends is holistic: it encompasses individual leadings, corporate discernment, historical witness, and Scripture. Scripture provides an important window into the workings of the Spirit, but it is not an authority by itself. Friends believe that the same Spirit that inspired the written word continues to reveal itself to us. We pay no special reverence to persons, institutions, or outward things; our emphasis is on the Spirit.

II. Corporate discernment and the corporate experience of the grace of God

Centered through stillness,

In Spirit gathered —

Do we dare reflect the Light?

...gathered to seek...

A. In worship

Our most visible peculiarity lies in the form of our worship: we sit together in silence, for some or all of our worship, trusting that the Spirit that has led others throughout history, whose works are written of in Scripture, can also fill us and guide us now. We hold within our communities some who find that the encouragement and guidance offered by a pastor is helpful to their own spiritual deepening and to their meeting community. The hope is that, whether programmed or unprogrammed, whatever occurs during worship contributes to and leads toward the deeper silence where we are all one and all one with God. Our experience as a community is rooted in our faith that by listening together we will hear the Divine, and together we can discern how we are led to act as a community and as individuals. This experience is the source of our unity that overcomes our differences.

Friends are not unique in the belief in the possibility of direct communication with God—all the great mystical traditions share that. Our more unusual gift is to understand not only that this capacity is latent in every human being, but that it is best nurtured, tested, and seasoned in group worship.

Friends' worship can be tender and fragile, requiring great trust among the worshippers. In the best of circumstances, it allows the Spirit to enter our minds and hearts and conforms our minds and wills, calling us to remember whence we came and whither we shall return, touching our hearts with the balm of Presence.

B. In meeting for business

Corporate discernment—that experience and process of waiting on the Divine, in unity, for unity—is a unique and precious aspect of life among Friends. Friends’ business practice is firmly grounded in finding Divine will. It encompasses the simple belief that by gathering together and worshiping as a community, we can be opened to God’s Truth, which we could not have found any other way. It also includes the experiential conviction that it is our attentiveness to the Presence in our midst, and our willingness to fall under the Spirit’s discipline by hearing and obeying a challenging message given through individuals, that leads us to right action. Our authority to act comes from the Spirit through the community as it listens together.

The discipline of corporate discernment ties us together as a community. The community supports and guides individuals in their journeys just as surely as the individuals inspire the community. The discipline of corporate discernment holds the community together, preventing it from fracturing into individuals, each following their own interpretation of the Inner Light. Our differences may provide opportunities for growth and understanding, thus invigorating the religious life of the community. We do not believe in either majority rule or in a leadership that must be followed: we recognize that the majority is not necessarily correct. We learn not to ride rough-shod over members with whom we disagree, but to take the time to listen to them and together to listen for God’s guidance. Our meetings for business are to discern God’s will and in the process to build up the community of faith. It is not our aim just to “get good things done.”

III. The “Testimonies”: Outward behavior as reflection of both inward experience and corporate experience of the grace of God

*Centered through stillness,
In Spirit gathered,
Do we dare reflect the Light? ...sent forth to serve.*

Our experience of the Spirit, both individually and corporately, has caused us to be moved toward what we think of as traditional Friends’ testimonies, such as peace, simplicity, equality, integrity. Each generation finds its own ways in which to live out these testimonies. These are not outer standards to strive toward: they are qualities toward which we are moved by the influence of the Spirit in our midst. Applying these inner truths to our everyday actions is what gives integrity to our lives. Being a Quaker is not something we just do on Sunday.

An individual’s—or a community’s—understanding of the implication of its religious values can grow, necessitating a change in action in order to live into the new light they have been given. Friends’ stand on slavery is an example.

New England Friends need to examine the degree to which we have let ourselves be co-opted by the culture, so often reflected in our lives by materialism and consumerism, busyness and political correctness. We see clearly that most of us are not living lives of marked simplicity, or arresting integrity, or astounding prayerfulness. Each generation faces its own challenges to truly live the Testimonies we profess.

Peculiarity of the Quaker kind cannot be resolved by intellect or feeling. It must be lived whole in the lives of particular individuals and their particular, practical societies. The final test of faithfulness is how Friends live: not the fact that they are a peculiar people, or even how that

peculiarity is specified. We must express ourselves as particularly and clearly as possible. Then we must live according to that faithfulness.

We are at our best as a Peculiar People when we are actively engaging with the differences within our communities, within our tradition, and within ourselves. We hold within our tradition the knowledge that there is a Truth, but that Truth cannot be held without love—that in carrying Truth without love we have lost both. We hold within our tradition the knowledge that each of us is given a measure of Truth, but that none of us has the entire Truth—and that the call is to live up to the Light we have.

Moving Forward to the Remaining Chapters: The Integration of Faith and Life

Whenever the committee re-reads the “Peculiar People” document, we realize how well it still describes our intentions and hopes, our sense of the rhythm of our work. As we have grappled with how to approach the rest of the book, we realize that our work so far has dealt with that which is foundational to our lives together—first, the gift of communal worship, in which we open ourselves to the divine Presence in our midst, in expectant waiting. We have also described that special form of collective dwelling in the Presence which is corporate discernment, out of which there come blessed times when we know the rising up of the Spirit and realize that we have come together into God’s unifying reality. In the Illustrative Experiences chapter we have gathered examples of the wide variety of Friends’ experiences with the divine and ways the Spirit has moved and been revealed in their lives. We have assembled a “how-to” section of appendices to offer practical guidance on Friends’ procedures. The faith out of which these procedures grow will be explored in chapters still to be written.

Our work now turns toward how our lives bear witness to the Spirit that guides us. In the remaining chapters we have the task before us of describing the integration of faith and life in our personal lives, our communal life as a religious society, and in the wider community. Over the past few years we have embraced both the faith that all testimonies come from the one Source, and the understanding that our whole lives, both personal and communal, are our testimony. We feel keenly what early Friends described as “Truth’s testimony,” the witness of the Inward Light—that which we feel and know throughout our whole being when we “stand still in that which shows and discovers.” This is the felt Presence that can move us to live “in the virtue of that Life and power ...”. Whether we come to this Source first through inner exploration or through the outer living of its principles, it remains the heart of our witness and the source of our integrity.

Though asked repeatedly for a definitive list of Quaker testimonies, our sense remains both that we cannot make such a list, and that attempting to do so involves the danger of “the testimonies” being held up as a kind of Quaker doctrine or creed. Lists such as the one represented by the relatively modern acronym SPICE (Simplicity, Peace, Integrity, Community, Equality) do indeed have their place in teaching situations. They describe some broad categories into which our faith often leads us, but they are also limiting, just as a creed is limiting. We want to hold up the central work of the Inward Guide as the driving force from which, ideally, all our actions arise, and to show what that looks like in our lives.

Our intention as we move forward with the book is to show the ways in which God is a living, active Spirit, guiding each one of us. This is our testimony. It manifests in our lives, in how we parent, in how we choose to interact with the earth community, in how we do business in the world, and in the choices we make as consumers and as citizens. We want to explore how our lives are infused with the testimony of the living God, whose nature includes truth, justice, compassion, and peace. To that end we want to include as much as possible of the lived experience of Friends. We ask that you share with us your experiences of how testimony, in all its variety, is expressed in your lives, both as individuals and as meetings.

We are also embracing the challenge of trying to describe the organizational structures of New England Friends, at the monthly, quarterly, and yearly meeting levels. In doing so we want to make it clear that we are a purpose-driven rather than a structure-driven organization—to describe not simply a framework, much as one might describe a skeleton which gives shape to a body, but to examine the life that is supported by that skeleton. We have been led to begin by asking:

What functions are needed for a healthy, faithful community?

What structures do we put in place locally and in the wider bodies of Friends to support these functions?

What are the kernels of wisdom in our current structures?

How can we write Faith and Practice in such a way that we don't commit ourselves to forms that don't have life and can't evolve?

We want to describe not just the outer forms which have changed over time, and will continue to change, but the essential motion of the Spirit in which they are rooted. We have found that those underlying spiritual functions fall under the broad categories of spiritual nurture and stewardship. Spiritual nurture is a vital part of our communities and one of the major reasons to form meetings. There, as fellow learners, we may grow in knowledge of the Spirit, support and encourage one another, and be a witness in the wider world to the truths we know. Stewardship is about making good, responsible, faithful use of what we have been given, spiritually and materially. There are both similarities and differences in how both spiritual nurture and stewardship are expressed in monthly, quarterly, and yearly meetings.

We are aware that as a Yearly Meeting we are at a time of transition in our structures and procedures. We on the Faith and Practice Revision Committee have found Life in our process of deep listening, mutual respect, and moving with “the unforced rhythms of grace” (Matt 11:29, *The Message*). We have sensed the driving force of Spirit when we are on the right track and we have felt the lulls and the stops when we are not yet clear. Working in this way, our vision has been fluid, evolving, and changing—and we have tried to let go of anxiety as we proceed without knowing the exact outcome. Continuing revelation is expected in healthy spiritual communities, bringing new life and constant change. We depend upon you to accompany us on this journey. Can we explore together both the solid and unchanging ground of our faith, as well as the motion among us of new insights and leadings that need new structures to free the Life? Can we embrace not fully understanding the new life which is being born, but try instead to be in right relationship, with God and with one another, while it is emerging—to be poised, nimble, and committed to responding faithfully?

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**NEW ENGLAND
YEARLY MEETING
OF FRIENDS**

**INTERIM FAITH AND PRACTICE
2014
(2015 EDITION)**

STUDY GUIDE

An aspect of grace is that the Spirit communicates with us in words, images, and feelings that engage us. It is our task as individuals and as meetings to discover how to live faithfully a path we have been given.

These words from Page 4 of the New England Yearly Meeting *Interim Faith and Practice 2014* encourage a process of discovery. This Study Guide offers some suggestions about how we as meeting communities might use this book to stimulate engagement in that process. It contains three sections.

Section 1: The chapters given preliminary approval by the Yearly Meeting

Section 2: The Appendices Working Paper

Section 3: “A Peculiar People” and “Moving Forward to the Remaining Chapters: The Integration of Faith and Life”

These three sections illustrate the interim nature of the book, which is very much in process. The preface and chapters in Section 1 have been given preliminary approval, which means they are substantially acceptable, and only minor changes to them are expected when the completed book is given final approval. Section 2 is a working paper and Section 3 describes the task in the chapters being drafted, which is to describe the integration of faith and life in our communal life as a religious society, in our personal lives, and in the wider community. We are eager to have Friends send input on these two sections.

It is our hope that Friends will become familiar with the *Interim Faith and Practice 2014* and allow this publication to deepen their faith as well as guide “practice.” Many meetings have reflected on working papers for the approved chapters, offering helpful feedback. These comments were crucial in revising the texts we presented to Sessions that were then given preliminary approval. Now that those chapters have been published, we want to encourage Friends to read them in a devotional way.

Our intent in developing this study guide is to provide such encouragement. We hope that when you pick up this book it will bring you into the company of the Spirit, as George Fox hoped to bring Friends “into touch with the Living Spirit of Christ and to leave them there.” (*British Friend* vol. 6, pg. 288, 1897)

Meetings may want to host a series of gatherings, possibly after worship, where Friends sit in a circle and read aloud—reading to simply listen—allowing the text to speak for itself, while taking time for quiet reflection between readings. This kind of listening/reading might offer an opportunity for prayer, articulation of faith, or ministry.

We also encourage Friends to familiarize themselves with the Appendices and use them. Meetings may ask particular committees to read sections that refer to practices related to their responsibilities, such as membership, marriage, or recognition of gifts and leadings. This may encourage those committees to clarify their own practices to the meetings.

SECTION 1. THE CHAPTERS WITH PRELIMINARY APPROVAL

Preface

Each extract in this Faith and Practice retains the original language used by the individual or faith community, language which may sound unfamiliar. Can you hear through the language to the writer's experience of the Spirit?

There are extracts that end most chapters, offered in the same spirit. It may sometimes be useful to read them separately from the main text.

1. Illustrative Experiences of Friends

Our tradition has always drawn people to trust in the Light and find their way to an inward experience of the Spirit, and at the same time we have found encouragement, inspiration and challenge in the witness of others. We therefore invite you to read and reflect on these "illustrative experiences," personal records of encounters with the Divine. These are not offered as statements of (or evidence for) particular beliefs, but more as invitations to join in the journey of the people called Quakers. Some are from long ago, and others are more recent and even contemporary, but similar threads keep reappearing across history and in our own lives. We hope these different voices will encourage you to find your own path into the community of Friends. The chapter is divided into five sections that reflect different aspects of the journey.

Which of these extracts speak most deeply to you and your condition? Can you express why?

Which extracts seem challenging or inaccessible to you? Sit with them. Trust that over time they may open avenues of truth for you.

2. Worship

This chapter is an introduction to the variety of practices of worship among Friends in New England and includes a series of reflections on what we are committing to when we come to meeting. Find what speaks to you, and hold what does not speak to you in waiting worship.

The “Advices and Queries” which follow the introductory essay focus especially on areas where Friends have needed encouragement and/or guidance.

What is familiar to you?

What is unfamiliar or challenging? What inspires you?

Which advices would provide an opportunity for growth for your meeting community?

Which queries are of the greatest challenge to the corporate worship in your meeting?

Which queries challenge you personally to greater faithfulness?

Which extracts opened a door for you?

3. Corporate Discernment in Meetings for Business

Our way of conducting business, which has arisen out of shared spiritual experience, is perhaps the most counter-cultural aspect of Quaker life. It takes time to get used to and to trust it, and it requires discipline of which we often need to be reminded. Let what we are trying to do be guided by the suggested procedures, the Advices for Clerks and the Advices and Queries meant for all.

Do the first three paragraphs of this chapter reflect your experience of your monthly meeting’s Meeting for Business?

Are there phrases or concepts here that are a fresh inspiration for you?

The Meeting for Business

This section is a hands-on expression of how to move the business of the meeting forward in a spiritually disciplined way.

Are there concepts or processes that bring fresh insight into the process for you?

Are there approaches that surprise you? Why?

Advices on Corporate Discernment

In considering these eight advices together, how would you name the spiritual disciplines called into action?

Advices for Clerks and for Recording Clerks

In your personal experience as a clerk, recording clerk or member of the business meeting, which advices were most helpful?

Queries on Corporate Discernment

Which queries do you personally find most challenging?

Which queries might best help your monthly meeting for business?

Extracts on Corporate Discernment

Which extracts provide you with fresh insight? Are there extracts you need to sit with?

9. A Brief History of Friends in New England

When you feel the atmosphere around early Friends and the power of their faith, do you recognize the call to live in the same virtue and power?

Do you read this as a record of faithfulness? Is your life a witness?

Can we learn from the places where we were less than faithful?

How do we feel about the leaders of our past? Do we accept leadership today in the same way?

Has anything moved you enough to search for primary sources?

11. General Advices and Queries

The advices and queries in Chapter 2 (Worship) and Chapter 3 (Corporate Discernment in Meetings for Business) are specific to the spiritual life and work described there. In this chapter general advices and queries are not focused by topic; they are intended to nurture faithfulness as a foundation for every thought and action. They challenge us to turn to the Inward Teacher to seek the particular ways we might be led to serve the one common interest of which Woolman speaks, both as individuals and as meetings, “turn[ing] all the treasures we possess into the channel of universal love.”

Pray with advices and queries; hold them in your hearts. Feel which speak to you, challenge you, show you the way.

Which advices and queries do you find unsettling? Why?

Which advices and queries do you find encouraging and/or empowering? How?

Is there an advice whose truth you doubt? Why?

Which of the extracts particularly resonate with your experience? Which extracts give you fresh insight? Which ones challenge you? Why?

SECTION 2. THE APPENDICES WORKING PAPER

The Appendices Working Paper is a response to the request from Friends in New England for more succinct guidance on membership and marriage clearness, travel minutes, recognizing gifts and ministry, and related processes. Fuller descriptions of the practices outlined here, including their history and spiritual underpinnings, will be treated in chapters on which we are now working. As you study the procedures outlined, we would appreciate your comments, particularly on the following:

What needs to be clarified, added or further developed?

Do your meeting practices differ?

If so, we would be interested in your sending us a description. Sending input to fandp@neym.org will help us revise the appendices to make them even more useful to everyone.

SECTION 3. “A PECULIAR PEOPLE” AND “MOVING

FORWARD TO THE REMAINING CHAPTERS: THE INTEGRATION OF FAITH AND LIFE”

A Peculiar People

The Faith and Practice Revision Committee presented “A Peculiar People” to Sessions in 2003 as “a window for the Yearly Meeting into the work we are doing.” We hoped it would describe the unity of faith and life we wanted to convey in the revision. We have been asked to consider including it somehow in the book and we welcome reflections on this from individuals or groups.

Moving Forward to the Remaining Chapters: The Integration of Faith and Life

Our intention as we move forward with the book is to show the ways in which God is a living, active Spirit, guiding us individually and corporately. This is our testimony. It is manifest in our lives, in how we parent, in how we choose to interact with the earth community, in how we do business in the world, and in the choices we make as consumers and as citizens. In these chapters we want to show how our lives can be infused with the testimony of the living God, whose nature includes truth, justice, compassion, and peace. The task before us is to show the spiritual motion that is the source of all “testimony.”

We seek to convey the experience of lives lived in faithfulness to the Source in the particular contexts of our communal life as a religious society, as individuals, and in the wider community. To that end we hope to include texts that convey the lived experience of Friends—and we want stories—stories of contemporary New England Friends, and of present or past witnesses that have moved you. We ask that you send us your experiences of how testimony, in all its variety, is expressed in your lives, both as individuals and as meetings and, particularly, of new openings for witness arising in the Yearly Meeting.

Please send them to fandp@neym.org.

Copies of this Study Guide can be downloaded from the NEYM website <http://neym.org/fp-revision/interim-faith-and-practice>. Print copies of the NEYM *Interim Faith and Practice 2014* may be ordered through the website or from the NEYM office, 901 Pleasant Street, Worcester, MA 01602 or email office@neym.org. E-book, large print, and PDF versions are/will be available at that website and address as well.

Approved by the NEYM Faith and Practice Revision Committee, January 31, 2015

