

1 **Draft Text on Pastoral Care**
2 **Presented at the 2018 NEYM Annual Sessions**

3
4 *“Knowing one another in that which is eternal” is the ground and basis for*
5 *walking with each other everyday and learning to care for each other.*
6
7

8 **Foundations of Pastoral Care**

9 1) Pastoral care is a reflection of the loving concern for the spiritual and
10 physical condition of Friends within a meeting. Thoughtful attention, careful
11 listening, and prayer are at its heart. The impulse to offer such care grows out of
12 the increased awareness, sensitivity and love for one another that flows out of
13 shared worship and a sense of unity in the Spirit. It is an extension of the direct
14 Divine care offered to each one of us. It happens most effectively in a meeting
15 where members know and trust one another. As a religious community, we
16 share the responsibility to be attentive to the needs and conditions of the
17 members and attenders in our meeting.
18

19 2) Times of fellowship and shared work allow personal ties to form which
20 help open the way for Friends to both ask for and to receive care from one
21 another. We come to know each other as we worship together, do business, and
22 work together on meeting committees. When we gather less formally in
23 discussion and study groups, to share meals and to work on social service
24 projects, the bonds of the community may grow into personal friendships. It is
25 important for meetings to encourage such opportunities for fellowship across
26 generations and between new and long time members and attenders. When our
27 meeting community is gathered in fellowship and in the Spirit, we are more
28 prepared to offer, or ask for, support when the need arises in our spiritual and
29 personal lives.
30

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

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

3

4 **Practices Supporting Pastoral Care**

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

9

10 *Spiritual Support*

11 6) At times of crisis, prayer and spiritual companionship are especially
12 important. While the meeting may also provide practical assistance, we have a
13 particular responsibility to offer each other spiritual support. Listening carefully
14 and patiently, without judgment, can be of immense help. Worshipping and
15 praying together can help bring reassurance and grounding. Knowing that
16 others are offering prayers at other times and places can provide comfort,
17 strength and consolation.

18

19 *Practical Care*

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

24

25 *Limits To What Friends Can Offer*

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

34

35 *Care Within The Meeting Community*

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

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

7
8 11) There are Friends whose life circumstances prevent them from engaging
9 as fully as they would wish in the life of the meeting. It is part of the pastoral
10 care of the meeting to address as many of these impediments as possible.
11 Solutions may range from fresh batteries in hearing assistance devices, to the
12 creation of a mid-week meeting for worship, or childcare during committee
13 meetings.

14
15 12) Sometimes it is unclear why a person is not attending meeting. When it is
16 noticed that a Friend has been absent for some time, an individual may enquire if
17 all is well. It may be that the Friend has found that the meeting is not the right
18 spiritual home for them and their spiritual search has taken them elsewhere.
19 Alternatively, if it becomes clear that a Friend is absent because of disaffection
20 with the meeting, Ministry and Counsel may offer an in-person visit. Friends are
21 called to overcome a hesitation born of uncertainty about how they will be
22 received, or from a sense of inadequacy, or fear of being with a person who is
23 angry or in crisis.

24
25 13) Friends also need to be alert to the subtle societal differences that can
26 create a sense of exclusion for an individual in the community. Members and
27 attenders come from a variety of social, economic, and ethnic backgrounds.
28 Meetings where many members are affluent, for example, may not feel
29 welcoming to those who struggle financially. People of color may find meetings
30 ignorant of or unsympathetic to their experience. Those who feel there is
31 disapproval of their choice of spiritual language may feel their spiritual insights
32 are disregarded or unwelcome. It is important for meetings to actively examine
33 their assumptions, expectations, and practices in order to ensure all who are
34 committed to the search for Truth are welcome. It is difficult to be aware of our
35 blind spots, but if our Society is to be genuinely inclusive it is essential that we
36 do this work together. In some cases, the meeting itself may need pastoral care.

37
38 14) There may be times when Ministry and Counsel calls on the meeting to
39 recognize ongoing revelation of Truth and places where falsity and discord
40 persist in ourselves as individuals. This occurred in the past, for example, when

1 meetings examined the participation of their members in the slave trade and in
2 the ownership of enslaved peoples. Friends continue to be challenged in
3 addressing racism in our midst. Structural inequalities of privilege and other
4 deep concerns will continue to challenge the Society and provide opportunities
5 for an evolving understanding of Truth.

6 7 *Tools For Maintaining Contact*

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

18 19 **Structures Supporting Pastoral Care of Individuals**

20 16) Meetings vary in the ways they structure the work of pastoral care and
21 this may depend on their size. Large meetings Ministry and Counsel may have a
22 Pastoral Care Committee under its charge. In small meetings Ministry and
23 Counsel may include pastoral care as part of its charge. In any case, the
24 committee seeks to identify Friends who are particularly gifted in this
25 area. Some New England meetings employ a pastor, part of whose work is to
26 share in the pastoral care of the meeting. It is helpful for Ministry and Counsel to
27 periodically remind the meeting whom to contact when pastoral care concerns
28 arise. Every type of meeting has structures that assist in delivering pastoral care:
29 clearness committees, support committees, and practical care committees, as
30 needed.

31 *Clearness Committees For Personal Discernment*

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

39

1 *Support Committees*

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

7
8 19) Friends also form a support committee for a meeting member who has a
9 defined ministry or position within the meeting, such as clerk. Similarly, support
10 committees are formed for Friends whose ministry takes them beyond the
11 meeting. Such a committee meets regularly with the individual to review how
12 things are going, to listen to concerns, to pray with them, and to help them gain
13 clarity on how to proceed. The committee seeks ways to help the Friend be
14 faithful to their calling. It also serves as an intermediary between the individual
15 and the meeting, letting the meeting know about and helping it understand the
16 work the Friend is doing. It encourages the meeting to hold the ministry of this
17 Friend in prayer.

18
19 20) In the case of a paid staff position or a released Friend, care should be
20 taken that the support committee for this ministry is separate from the oversight
21 of the Friend's job or ministry. See the discussion of paid staff at **** or released
22 Friends at ***.

23
24 *Practical Care Committees*

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

32
33 *Pastoral Care Of Children And Young People*

34 22) Befriending the children and youth of our meeting is something each
35 person can do to build up the young person's sense of being cherished and of
36 belonging to the community. Their needs and concerns may be heard as older
37 Friends take the time to pay attention to their words and actions. There can be
38 rich sharing and learning between the generations when adults are willing to
39 approach such conversations in a vulnerable and honest way. Children and
40 young people want to have their spiritual journeys taken seriously, they want to

1 be heard and asked challenging questions, and in turn, they want adults to be
2 open with them about their own journeys and questions.

3
4 23) Monthly meetings may also encourage families to involve their children
5 and youth in programs beyond the meeting. During the school year, the yearly
6 meeting offers weekend retreats for a variety of age groups and some quarterly
7 meetings host family retreats. There are programs for all age groups during
8 yearly meeting sessions. The yearly meeting camp, Friends Camp in China,
9 Maine, offers a series of programs during the summer.

10
11 24) Pastoral care offered by the meeting is usually within the context of the
12 family and with parental consultation. At a certain point, however, children and
13 young people may need confidential care separate from their parents or families.
14 Families experiencing divorce, substance abuse, illness, or death, for example,
15 may be overwhelmed and not equipped to provide the support a child needs.
16 Young people struggling with issues around relationships, sexuality, gender
17 identity, or peer pressure, to name a few, may feel more comfortable exploring
18 their thoughts and concerns with a trusted adult member of the meeting who is
19 outside of their family. When families request the help of the meeting to provide
20 pastoral care for their children it is critical to make boundaries and expectations
21 clear and explicit. When a child requests care on their own, they may request that
22 their concerns not be shared with their family. It is critical in these instances also
23 that boundaries and expectations be clear and explicit. When a child requests
24 care, and does not wish their family to know about the request, the individual or
25 meeting must proceed with caution.

26
27 25) All adults providing pastoral care to children, either formally or
28 informally, must be aware of circumstances where confidentiality cannot be
29 maintained, for example situations of abuse or self-harm. Familiarity with
30 mandatory reporting laws is essential. Safety of the child should always be the
31 first concern. Those providing pastoral care, especially those working as
32 individuals, should take great care never to put themselves in a position where
33 the safety of the child could be called into question. The Yearly Meeting has a
34 Child Safety Policy that should be carefully read and understood. Each state has
35 differing regulations regarding the responsibility of churches with respect to
36 child safety. Monthly meetings should be aware of the regulations in their own
37 state. The Yearly Meeting also has other support materials that may be useful to
38 monthly meetings and to others doing work in the wider Friend's community.

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

7
8 *See Appendix 8B for further information on structures and procedures to support*
9 *pastoral care of individuals*

11 **Pastoral Care of the Meeting**

12 *Balance of Individual and Community Needs*

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

19 *Dealing With Conflict*

20
21 28) It is important for the health of the meeting that it be sensitive to conflict
22 and move to resolve it without delay, if possible. Addressing conflicts is an
23 opportunity for growth. When there is an interpersonal conflict and the
24 individuals have not been able to resolve the difficulty privately, a Friend, or
25 small group of Friends facilitates listening such that each person in the conflict is
26 supported in hearing the concerns of the other. It is essential that all individuals
27 involved in the conflict, or in its resolution, be willing to engage in the process
28 and be open to finding unity in the Spirit. The same applies to groups within the
29 meeting that are at odds with one another. If a conflict is widely known within
30 the meeting community, it is important for Ministry and Counsel to make a
31 broad statement that the problem is being addressed with love, and to respect
32 confidentiality in terms of names and problem specifics. The process of dealing
33 with conflict, whether resolved or not, may leave meetings themselves in need of
34 pastoral care.

35
36 29) Meetings are often reluctant to admit troubling internal differences and to
37 ask for pastoral care for themselves from beyond the local meeting. Friends are
38 called to care for one another and to offer loving support to a meeting just as they
39 would to an individual experiencing difficulties. Support and prayerful

1 discernment can be sought from quarterly or yearly meeting ministry and
2 counsel, remembering that some conflicts require a long, slow healing process.

3
4 *Affirmations and Trust*

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

11
12 *A Shared Responsibility*

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

18
19 **EXTRACTS**

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

22 The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.
23 He maketh me to lie down in green pastures:
24 he leadeth me beside the still waters.
25 He restoreth my soul:
26 he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.
27 Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,
28 I will fear no evil: for thou art with me;
29 thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.
30 Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies:
31 thou anointest my head with oil;
32 my cup runneth over.
33 Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life:
34 and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.

35 **Psalm 23, King James Version**

36
37 2. The eternal God is thy dwelling place, And underneath are the
38 everlasting arms.

39 **Deuteronomy 33:27, American Standard Version**

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

4 **Isaac Penington, 1667**

5
6 4. *A message about pastoral care addressed to the young Christian churches:*
7 He comes alongside us when we go through hard times, and before you know
8 it, he brings us alongside someone else who is going through hard times so that
9 we can be there for that person just as God was there for us.

10 **2 Corinthians 1:4, The Message**

11
12 5. When I meet with a person, a couple or a family, in need or pain, I
13 consider this meeting a special form of meeting for worship; a meeting where
14 we gather to focus on the needs of the person or family and seek to discern the
15 healing and guiding movement of the Spirit. Such a meeting is sacred. It is a
16 place of meeting – of encounter – with ourselves, with each other, and with
17 God. It is a place where we may be surprised by God, where we may be
18 confronted by painful realities, where we may find a deep sense of relational
19 connection and where we may discover healing, new life and empowerment....

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

26 **Maureen Graham, 2001**

27
28 6. The healing journey is not simple it is not easy. There is a deep
29 restlessness to be totally well, totally healed. Yet I realize having gone through
30 a threatening illness that what held me together was not my own strength, but
31 the strength of a community that held me up in prayer and action. It was all-
32 important. I needed that prayer. I felt it in core places physical and spiritual. At
33 one point in Intensive Care I was in so much pain and unable to communicate...

34 My world was filled with the endlessness of hospital noise. And I was
35 trying to shut it all out, I was trying to shut down. It was just a draining
36 experience. Then out of the darkness I heard two voices. Judy and Dave were
37 in the room by my bed talking to me, holding me in the Mist of unity. And I
38 had nothing to say.... Well, I had a lot to say but I was having a Zacharias
39 experience—unable to speak, but excited because in that moment I was
40 understanding a lot. My frustration deepened, but only for a moment. It

1 became not important that I could not communicate, that my words were
2 useless. I had an interior understanding and while I was frustrated in my
3 silence, it was in the depth of a deepening understanding that I grew to
4 understand the beauty of our Quaker silence. I gave myself up to it and I was
5 nourished —by Judy and Dave that day and by many other Friends on what
6 seemed like many endless days. I let that blanket of goodness cover me.

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

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

16 **Greg Williams, 2007**

- 17
18 7. All of us deeply yearn to be known, to be “heard into speech,” as Parker
19 Palmer says. Each of us needs to be loved unconditionally, to be given space to
20 grow, to be forgiven, to be nudged gently open, and to join in some sort of
21 communion in awe and wonder. I believe this is what makes spiritual
22 community.

23 **Gretchen Baker Smith, 2012**

- 24
25 8. When (*young people are*) asked what they would find helpful, their advice
26 to adults is simple “Treat us like you’d like to be treated. Treat us with
27 respect,” says Ben “and don’t just make chit-chat. I’ve got views on just about
28 any issue, and I like people who actually can talk about things.” Youth want to
29 have significant relationships with meeting adults...

30 Patti encourages adults to move beyond their stereotypes about young
31 people. “Some people seem not to get beyond the fact that I’m only
32 eleven. Then there are people who just think of me as ‘my dad’s daughter’...I
33 feel like they don’t really try to get to know *me*...”

34 Patti continues “I think one reason why adults don’t try to get to know the
35 kids in the meeting that well is because they’re scared of us. Don’t ask me why.
36 And when they get scared it intimidates the kids and also makes the kids a
37 little shyer.”

38 **Marty Smith and Carolyn Terrell, 1995**

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

15 **Maggie Edmondson, 2017**

16
17 10. People who exhibit behavior which we describe as “difficult” make us
18 uncomfortable, and it is a very normal human response to want a lessening of
19 discomfort... Our discomfort is useful in letting us know that something is
20 wrong, something needs attention – but what?

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

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

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

27 Individually and collectively, how might we be causing, or at the very least,
28 contributing to the behavior we find unacceptable? Are we giving a consistent
29 message to the person whose behavior is troubling that we find the behavior
30 unacceptable, or do some of us directly or indirectly affirm the behavior?

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

34 And yes, we need to recognize how we take advantage of qualities which
35 make a person well-suited to a committee assignment, such as being
36 meticulous in the care of property, and then become impatient with them when
37 they carry that to an extreme. I am not saying that we cause difficult behavior,
38 but I am clear that there are ways in which we inadvertently intensify it.

39 **Arlene Kelly, 2004**

40

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

5 **Britain Yearly Meeting, Quaker Faith and Practice, section 1.02, No. 18**
6

7 **ADVICES AND QUERIES**

8 **Advices for Individuals**

- 9 1. Accompany one another as spiritual companions. Encourage one
10 another. Be willing to speak up in love when you see another go astray,
11 and to humbly receive loving admonition when your own behavior is in
12 question.
- 13 2. Pray for one another. Listen carefully and with openness. Practice
14 mindfulness of one another's joys, concerns, burdens, infirmities, and
15 sorrows. Cultivate an inward resolve to respond in compassionate,
16 helpful and practical ways.
- 17 3. When offering spoken prayer in the presence of someone in need, trust
18 that the Spirit will provide the words. Remember that the resources of the
19 Spirit are vast and you may be the vehicle the Spirit has chosen to bring
20 comfort and healing.
- 21 4. Be aware of the spiritual journey of the children and youth of the meeting.
22 Remember, experience of the Spirit has no age barriers. Consider how we
23 give and receive support across generations.
- 24 5. Inter-visitation has traditionally been important to maintaining loving
25 connections. Do not discard meaningful traditions simply because new
26 technologies may be more convenient. Intangible benefits accrue when we
27 gather face-to-face in the Spirit.
- 28 6. Give freely of your time and your attentive presence to the extent that the
29 duties and callings of your own life allow.
- 30 7. Keep in mind the needs and well-being of the whole meeting community
31 and balance this with the needs of individuals, including yourself.

32 33 **Queries for Individuals**

- 34 1. How do you stay in fellowship with Friends you find difficult?
- 35 2. How do you interact with the youth of your meeting?
- 36 3. Where do you need to practice forgiveness or at least more spiritual
37 generosity?
- 38 4. What stops you from offering help?

- 1 5. How do you discern what your work is to do?
- 2 6. Are you attentive to others in the “small things” so that you are prepared
- 3 to be of service when called for larger pastoral care work?
- 4 7. Do you cultivate the humility necessary for the time when you will need
- 5 to ask for and receive pastoral care yourself?

6
7

8 **APPENDIX 8: PASTORAL CARE AND CLEARNESS COMMITTEES FOR**

9 **PERSONAL DISCERNMENT**

10

11 **8A. Advices and Queries for Pastoral Care Committees**

12

13 **Advices**

14

- 15 1. As a meeting, we accept a degree of responsibility and concern for one
- 16 another. We would not wish to turn aside from one another in times of
- 17 need.
- 18 2. As members of pastoral care committees we wish to ensure that all
- 19 members of our community are able to draw upon the meeting’s care and
- 20 concern. Useful ways to give support will necessarily vary from one
- 21 situation to another. As we offer help we strive to be sensitive to one
- 22 another’s spiritual, emotional, and material condition, and to the need of
- 23 each of us to maintain our personal dignity and protect our privacy.
- 24 3. Pastoral care committees should be careful not to act beyond their
- 25 competence or beyond the limits of their proper responsibility.
- 26 4. Our feelings and motivations necessarily color our decisions and
- 27 discussions about individuals. We need to be especially aware of our
- 28 feelings about a person and that these may overcome our ability to discern
- 29 God’s will. We should be prayerful in maintaining this awareness and, as
- 30 necessary, remaining silent in our meetings.

31

32 **Queries**

33

- 34 1. Do we reach out to ensure that contact is maintained with all of our
- 35 meeting community? Do we make clear that we are available to offer
- 36 mutual support—spiritual, emotional, and material? Are all encouraged to
- 37 seek and accept the support of the meeting?
- 38 2. Do we take care that each member of our community is held in sensitive
- 39 awareness, with respect for personal dignity and privacy? Are we tender

- 1 of one another's feelings? Do we maintain confidentiality, avoid gossip,
2 and refrain from unnecessary and inappropriate exchange of information?
- 3 3. How do the often-invisible cultural norms of our meetings keep some
4 Friends at a distance?
- 5 4. As we offer pastoral care, do we each maintain awareness of our own
6 needs and motivations and the effect these may have on our own care-
7 giving? Are we careful to distinguish personal feelings about
8 individuals—positive or negative— from our charge to care for them? In
9 striving to help others, do we seek the Spirit through prayer and silence?
- 10 5. Are we sensitive to the limits of our capacities and the limits of our
11 responsibilities? Are we prepared to express these limits and recommend
12 professional resources?
- 13 6. Do we remember to faithfully hold in prayer those to whom we offer care?
14 Do we as members of pastoral care committees hold ourselves mutually
15 accountable to the spirit of these queries?
- 16

17 **8B. Guidance for a Clearness Committee for Personal Discernment**

18

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

30

31 **Organizing the clearness committee**

32

- 33 1. The person seeking clearness always initiates the request to form a committee,
34 though a friend may ask, "Would a clearness committee be helpful?" The
35 request is brought to Ministry and Council who invites the person to name
36 people they feel may be helpful and Ministry and Council may suggest others.
37 Ministry and Council then appoints the clearness committee.
- 38 2. In advance of the meeting, it is helpful for the person seeking clearness to
39 describe the matter in writing, identifying it as precisely as possible and giving

1 relevant background information. This should be made available to committee
2 members.

3

4 **Conducting the clearness committee**

5

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

13

- 14 1. The clerk invites the committee to prepare for its work, reminds everyone
15 of the guidelines to be followed and makes sure there is a common
16 understanding of the degree of confidentiality about the meeting.
- 17 2. All settle into a period of centering silence.
- 18 3. When the person seeking clearness is ready, they begin with a brief
19 summary of the question or concern.
- 20 4. Members of the committee hold to a discipline of asking brief, probing
21 question as led by the Spirit, resisting urges to present solutions or give
22 advice. It is crucial that these questions be asked not for the sake of
23 satisfying the questioner's curiosity, but for the sake of drawing out the
24 person's clarity. The pace of questions should be kept deliberately gentle
25 and relaxed to encourage reflection. Committee members should also trust
26 their intuitions. Even if a question seems odd, if it feels insistent it should
27 be asked.
- 28 5. The person seeking clearness normally answers the questions in front of
29 the group and the response generates more questions. It is always the
30 person's absolute right not to answer. The more often a person can
31 answer, the more they and the committee have to go on, but this should
32 never be done at the expense of the person's privacy or need to protect
33 vulnerable feelings. It is a good idea for the person seeking clearness to
34 keep answers fairly brief so that time remains for more discernment.
- 35 6. Do not be anxious if there are extended periods of silence. It does not
36 mean that nothing is happening; in fact, the Spirit may be powerfully at
37 work within the person seeking clearness and the committee members.
- 38 7. Well before the end of the session, following at least half an hour of
39 questions and answers, the clerk pauses to ask the person how they wish
40 to proceed. This is an opportunity for the person to choose, if it feels

1 appropriate, a mode of seeking clarity other than questions. The recorder
2 continues to record during this time. Possibilities include:

- 3 a) silence out of which anyone may speak
- 4 b) silence out of which people share images as they concentrate on the
5 person seeking clearness
- 6 c) continued questions from the committee
- 7 d) reflection on what has been said
- 8 e) affirmation of the person's gifts
- 9 f) questions to the committee from the person seeking clearness

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

19 **8C. Queries for Those Asked to Serve on Clearness Committees**

21 **Queries**

- 23 1. Is this your work to do at this time?
- 24 2. Can you devote sufficient time and energy to this committee, knowing
25 that it may take several meetings and many weeks or months to clarify the
26 problem and provide support while the decision is made and carried out?
- 27 3. Do you feel sufficiently at ease with the person seeking clearness and with
28 the other members of the committee to work with them? Can you engage
29 with them to provide an atmosphere in which Divine guidance can be
30 sought?
- 31 4. If it is a decision to be made by more than one person, can you set aside
32 your own prejudice or bias as you listen to each person involved?
- 33 5. Are you willing to keep the committee discussions confidential and avoid
34 gossiping or referring to them outside the committee unless those
35 requesting the help of the committee are comfortable with a wider
36 sharing?
- 37 6. Can you keep an open heart and an open mind about the outcome?

1 **Advices for Those Who Have Agreed to Serve on Clearness Committees**

- 2
- 3 1. While the convener takes care of the practical details of setting up the
- 4 meeting and keeps a sense of right order while it is in progress, remember
- 5 that each member of the committee shares responsibility for maintaining a
- 6 prayerful presence, asking for times of silence when needed, and asking
- 7 questions as led by the Spirit. It is not an occasion to provide counseling
- 8 but a spiritual exercise which aims to help the person or people requesting
- 9 clearness to hear the Spirit's guidance for themselves. Don't offer
- 10 solutions or advice but ask honest, probing questions to assist them in this
- 11 process. Listen deeply to all that is said.
- 12 2. If the meeting is for more than one person, try to give equal attention to
- 13 each person present, whether adult or child.
- 14 3. In the case of difficulties or joyful complexities, remember that people are
- 15 capable of change and growth. Focus on the situation that is prompting
- 16 the need for discernment.
- 17
- 18

19 **EXTRACT REFERENCES**

- 20 1) Psalm 23, King James Version
- 21 2) Deuteronomy 33:27, American Standard Version
- 22 3) Isaac Pennington, *Letters*, ed John Barclay, 1828, p 139; 3rd edn, 1844, p 138
- 23 (Letter LII, to Friends in Amersham, dated Aylesbury, 4 iii [May] 1667).
- 24 4) 2 Corinthians 1:4, The Message
- 25 5) Maureen Graham Pg. 6-7 "Out of the Silence" Quaker Perspective on Pastoral
- 26 Care and Counseling edited by J. Bill Ratliff. Pendle Hill Publications 2001
- 27 6) Greg Williams, unpublished 2007
- 28 7) Gretchen Baker Smith, IMYM Keynote Address published in *Western Friend*,
- 29 September/October 2012 as "Living Bravely in Sacred Time, Nurturing a
- 30 multigenerational spiritual community of Friends"
- 31 8) Philadelphia Yearly Meeting Pastoral Care Newsletter March 1995, "Nurturing
- 32 Families and Children in Meeting" by Marty Smith and Carolyn Terrell
- 33 9) Maggie Edmondson, unpublished 2017
- 34 10) Arlene Kelly, "Dealing with Difficult Situations," October 2004, Philadelphia
- 35 Yearly Meeting Pastoral Care Newsletter
- 36 11) Britain Yearly Meeting, *Quaker Faith and Practice*, section 1.02, No. 18
- 37
- 38
- 39