Faith and Practice of North Pacific Yearly Meeting—Transitional Version

Updated 10/2013

This transitional version of NPYM’s Faith and Practice includes material revised for use by NPYM Friends by the Committee on the Discipline. The revised material is in dark blue font, with a revision date in the page footers and at the end of the chapter. The text of the 1993 Faith and Practice appears in chapters that have not yet been revised.

Revised chapter in this update:
- Marriage and Committed Relationships
- The Yearly Meeting
- Bibliography

Comments about the revision to NPYM’s Faith and Practice may be addressed to

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[A new index and an index of quotations, will be prepared when the Faith and Practice revision is complete]
Introduction

HISTORICALLY, as Friends conducted their business and drew up their minutes, they noted points where they were able to see clearly how to proceed. These records did not become inflexible rules, but were revised as needed. Guidance from within could always open Friends’ eyes to a new sense of direction. Over the years they created documents that served both as records and as guides. Such a document was often called a “Book of Discipline.”

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

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

A Quaker book of discipline, also called Faith and Practice, reflects both of these meanings as it sets forth the attitudes and experiences of Friends as guideposts to be considered prayerfully and carefully, and the practices which Friends Meetings have tested and revised over the years. Each such book reflects the attitudes, the experiences, and the unique approach to Quakerism of a given body of Friends at a particular time and place.

Faith and Practice is an evolving document, reflecting the growing experience of Friends in North Pacific Yearly Meeting as we seek to know and follow the Inner Light. This second edition reflects change in the discipline of Marriage and Committed Relationships in our Yearly Meeting. Members and attenders are urged to study, use and evaluate the book in the spirit of the Inner Light. Suggested changes which arise from individuals or committees are to be forwarded to the Discipline Committee. After consideration, they are seasoned through the actions of Monthly and Quarterly Meetings and the Yearly Meeting. They may be incorporated in a future edition.

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

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

Modern Friends still aspire to use Faith and Practice with this attitude in mind. In 1954 Jan Palen Rushmore spoke similarly, but in a different metaphor: “The teachings of our Quaker forefathers were intended to be landmarks, not campsites.”
History

A Brief Overview

That which people had been vainly seeking without, with much pains and cost, they by this ministry found within, where it was they wanted what they sought for, namely the right way to peace with God. For they were directed to the light of Jesus Christ within them, as the seed and leaven of the kingdom of God.

— William Penn, 1694

THE MOVEMENT which resulted in the Religious Society of Friends arose in seventeenth-century England after the height of the Puritan revolution. In this period of great religious ferment and seeking, when old church forms were being questioned and many people were reading the Bible for the first time, Quakers sought through direct inward experience to find again the life and power of early Christianity.

George Fox was born in 1624 in the hamlet called Drayton-in-the-Clay, located in Leicestershire in the heart of the Midlands. His parents were Christopher and Mary (Lago) Fox, both Puritans. Christopher was a church warden and his trade was weaving. George was apprenticed to a shoemaker who also dealt in sheep and cattle. From his boyhood resolution to be honest in all things, George went on to reject all double standards of living. After much Bible study and travel about the country seeking help and comfort from ministers and members of established religious sects, he had an experience at the age of twenty-three which he later described in his Journal:

As I had forsaken all the priests, so I left the separate preachers also, and those called the most-experienced people. For I saw there was none among them all that could speak to my condition. And when all my hopes in them and in all men were gone, so that I had nothing outwardly to help me, nor could tell what to do, then, O then, I heard a voice which said, “There is one, even Christ Jesus, that can speak to thy condition,” and, when I heard it my heart did leap for joy. Then the Lord did let me see why there was none upon the earth that could speak to my condition, namely, that I might give him all the glory. For all are concluded under sin, and shut up in unbelief, as I had been, that Jesus Christ might have the pre-eminence, who enlightens, and gives grace and faith and power. Thus when God doth work, who shall let it? And this I knew experimentally. My desires after the Lord grew stronger and zeal in the pure knowledge of God and of Christ alone, without the help of any man, book or writing. For though I read the Scriptures that spoke of Christ and of God, yet I knew him not but by revelation, as he who hath the key, did open, and as the Father of life drew me to his Son by his spirit. And then the Lord did gently lead me along, and let me see his love, which was endless and eternal.

During the next five years, as George Fox traveled about England, small groups of like-minded people began to gather. These early Quakers had a remarkable sense of mission: having found a personal encounter with Christ, they felt compelled to share it with all who would listen. By the year 1700, George Fox and the Valiant Sixty had traveled all over England and to Wales, Scotland, and Ireland. Holland, Germany, and France were visited by Friends, and Mary Fisher went to see the Sultan of Turkey. Thousands of Friends had been imprisoned and hundreds had died in prison.

Beginning in 1655 many Quakers visited Barbados and the English colonies. They won the struggle for religious toleration in New England and Virginia, thousands settled, and meetings were established in all the colonies. George Fox and twelve other Friends made a trip in 1672, visiting Barbados, arriving in Maryland and traveling to all of the important Quaker centers. Colonies of Friends settled in New Jersey in 1675 and 1677, and in Pennsylvania after 1681, when William Penn received the grant from King Charles II.
The first Yearly Meeting met in Newport, Rhode Island, in 1661 and this was followed by the establishment of Yearly Meetings in Dublin, London, Baltimore, Virginia, Philadelphia (including New Jersey), New York, and North Carolina. As the distances were great, Friends continued to look to England more than to the neighboring colonies.

The first minute of advice against the slave trade was written in 1688 by Germantown Friends, near Philadelphia.

In the eighteenth century there was continued visiting by Friends in the traveling ministry, who sometimes spent as long as a year visiting meetings and families. This intervisitiation was supplemented by letters and epistles and had a unifying effect. The writings of the founders of the Society were widely circulated and read. These early Friends saw no need for higher education and, given the rigors of frontier life, there was at this time a decline in educated leadership. However, because so much attention was paid to establishing elementary schools in Quaker communities, the general literacy level was raised above that of the colonies in general.

As John Woolman and other concerned Friends aroused the consciences of many, Meetings became more and more uneasy about slavery. The subject was brought up again and again, until in 1784 the Society was united in refusing membership to any who held slaves. Friends continued to work for universal abolition.

The first Meeting for Sufferings in the colonies was established in 1756 by Philadelphia Yearly Meeting to extend relief and assistance to Friends on the frontiers who might suffer from the Indians or others; to represent the Yearly Meeting; and to look out for the interests of the Society, but not to “meddle with matters of faith or discipline.”

The Yearly Meetings’ comparatively informal rules of order were reduced to writing, and manuscript copies were made for the use of the Quarterly Meetings. Parts were printed from time to time, and eventually an official *Extracts from the Minutes and Advices* was published by Philadelphia Yearly Meeting and distributed to its constituent monthly meetings.

Withdrawal of Friends in America from government, and from society generally, began with the trials of the years of the French and Indian Wars (1754-1763). Naval actions in the Napoleonic wars and the war of 1812 cut off opportunity for travel for both American and British Friends.

Friends had come to rely upon tradition and the truth that had been revealed to previous generations, rather than remaining open to new revelation. At the same time Americans, including Quakers, were being influenced by the democratic ideas of the Declaration of Independence, rationalism, and the more liberal religious philosophy of the French Revolution and a religious movement of evangelism. A struggle developed between Friends who emphasized the outward historical events recorded in Scripture and those who emphasized inward mystical experience. It began as a controversy over the authority of the elders, but became a theological controversy between the followers of the historic Christ (Orthodox) and followers of the Inward Christ (Hicksite). Each emphasized a portion of the message of early Friends and rejected the rest as they saw it interpreted by the other group.

The first separations came in 1827 in Philadelphia Yearly Meeting and 1828 in New York Yearly Meeting, with two-thirds of the membership, particularly those in the country, forming Hicksite Meetings. There were no separations in New England, Virginia, or North Carolina Yearly Meetings. Baltimore Yearly Meeting separated but the Orthodox group was very small. Ohio Yearly Meeting, established in 1813, separated into groups of equal size. Indiana Yearly Meeting, established in 1821, had a much larger Orthodox group. London Yearly Meeting chose to recognize the Orthodox Yearly Meetings and ignored the Hicksite Yearly Meetings until 1915.

Within the Orthodox Yearly Meetings, there began to be one group which was increasingly attached to Quaker tradition and belief in the inward life as supported by John Wilbur, while another group was sympathetic to the ideas of Joseph John Gurney with increasing emphasis on the importance of Biblical authority. In 1845, in New England, a small group of Friends formed a separate Yearly Meeting with John Wilbur, while in Ohio Yearly Meeting the Wilburites were the larger group in a separation. Philadelphia Yearly Meeting avoided another division by stopping all communication with other Yearly Meetings, a situation which persisted until 1910. Lack of communication and the resulting isolation deprived some Friends of a steadying conservative influence and others of the stimulus of liberal and progressive movements.

Later, in the 1870’s, as Orthodox Yearly Meetings accepted the pastoral system in Iowa, Indiana, and Kansas, and in 1903 in North Carolina, new Conservative yearly meetings were established.

Another major nineteenth-century development was the establishment of Quaker colleges. Haverford was founded in 1833 and Earlham in 1847. In the years between 1864 and 1900 there were founded Swarthmore, Bryn Mawr, Wilmington, Penn, Guilford, Whittier, Pacific (now George Fox), Friends University, and Nebraska Central.
There were various gatherings of Friends for cooperative effort and greater unity of purpose and practice. These resulted in the establishment of Friends General Conference in 1900 and, in 1902, Five Years Meeting (now Friends United Meeting). Ohio Yearly Meeting did not join Five Years Meeting, and Oregon Yearly Meeting withdrew in 1926, Kansas Yearly Meeting in 1937. In 1957 Rocky Mountain Yearly Meeting separated from Nebraska Yearly Meeting. These four Yearly Meetings formed the Evangelical Friends Alliance in 1965.

The reunion of Yearly Meetings began in New England in 1945 with the joining of the Orthodox and Wilburite Yearly Meetings and two independent Monthly Meetings. In 1955 the Hicksite and Orthodox Meetings joined in both New York and Philadelphia Yearly Meetings. Three bodies joined to become Canadian Yearly Meeting.

Before 1900 many Friends had moved to the western states. Joel Bean and his family had arrived in San Jose, California, from Iowa in 1882. In 1889 they and other Friends formed the College Park Association of Friends. It was unique because it was made up of Friends from different backgrounds and had no formal recognition by any Yearly Meeting.

Friends from Iowa organized the first west coast Monthly Meeting at Newberg, Oregon, in 1878, and in 1893 Oregon Yearly Meeting (now Northwest) was established by Iowa Yearly Meeting. California Yearly Meeting was established in 1895, also under Iowa Yearly Meeting. Friends Memorial Meeting in Seattle was organized in 1905, part of Puget Sound Quarterly Meeting of Indiana Yearly Meeting. Friends from this Meeting formed University Friends Worship Group, which became a Preparative Meeting in 1938 and a Monthly Meeting in 1940.

Pacific Coast Association of Friends was formed and met for the first time in 1931. Friends came from Corvallis, Oregon; Seattle, Washington; and Victoria and Vancouver, British Columbia to meet with California Friends from San Jose, Los Gatos, Palo Alto, Berkeley, Riverside, and Pasadena. Participation increased over the years until the need was felt for the organization of a Yearly Meeting. The decision was made after much discussion, and the first session of Pacific Yearly Meeting was held in 1947.

Friends in Corvallis began to meet as a worship group in 1927. They and other Friends in the Willamette Valley began to worship together each month in Salem. In 1948 these Friends formed Willamette Valley Monthly Meeting, a part of Pacific Yearly Meeting. They also became a part of Northwest Half-Yearly Meeting, which included University Monthly Meeting and British Columbia and Alberta Quarterly Meeting.


Oregon and Washington Friends began to feel that they could no longer host Pacific Yearly Meeting and that their numbers had increased enough for a Yearly Meeting in the Northwest. After a joint Quarterly Meeting in 1971 and a trial gathering in 1972, they met as North Pacific Yearly meeting in 1973. This now includes Friends in Idaho and in Montana, where Billings Monthly Meeting was established in 1984.

Between 1986 and 1993, we had continued growth in the Yearly Meeting: In Idaho, Boise Valley; in Montana, Heartland and Missoula; in Oregon, Rogue Valley; and in Washington, Salmon Bay became Monthly Meetings. In addition to the fifteen Monthly Meetings, we have one Preparative Meeting (Walla Walla) and twenty-four worship groups throughout Montana, Idaho, Washington, and Oregon.

In 1972 Canadian Friends decided to limit their activities to Canadian Yearly Meeting rather than to join North Pacific Yearly Meeting.

The Meetings in Arizona and New Mexico left Pacific Yearly Meeting and joined with Colorado Friends to become Intermountain Yearly Meeting in 1975.
North Pacific and Intermountain Yearly Meetings continue to cooperate with Pacific Yearly Meeting in Friends Bulletin and some committees.

**Recent Development: The Evolution of Faith and Practice**

In 1986 the first edition of *Faith and Practice* was presented at Annual Session of North Pacific Yearly Meeting. Many were deeply concerned with the first sentence of the Marriage section, which read, “In a marriage, a man and a woman enter into a covenant with each other and with God.” A lengthy discussion ensued. Out of the expressions of pain and searching, the Meeting minuted:

*North Pacific Yearly Meeting accepts its newly published Faith and Practice as a gift and as a living, evolving document. We are unable to reach unity on whether a marriage is ‘a covenant between two persons and God’ or ‘a covenant between a man and a woman and God’. We urge Meetings to discuss these varied views during the next year.”*

Although many Meetings discussed the issue, no action was taken until the 1990 Yearly Meeting. By that time, some change had taken place and it was minuted:

*“Yearly Meeting finds that the first sentence in the chapter on marriage in Faith and Practice does not reflect the state of the Yearly Meeting and directs the Discipline Committee to begin its revision process of that sentence, at least.”*

The Discipline Committee began working on the task in November, 1990. They met (using telephone conference calls) frequently over the next two and one-half years. The new section on Marriage and Committed Relationships evolved through five drafts of the material. Each of the draft documents went to the Steering Committee and then was sent to the Monthly Meetings and Worship Groups for seasoning, comments and concerns. Friends shared a great deal of feedback which the committee attempted to incorporate into the material. At the 1991 and 1992 Yearly Meetings, drafts were presented and Friends met with the Discipline Committee.

In the process of working on the section and learning more about and from gay and lesbian members and attenders, many Monthly Meetings within the Yearly Meeting minuted their clearness to take both heterosexual and homosexual couples under their care.

In the spring of 1993, the Steering Committee approved the section on Marriage and Committed Relationships and directed the publication of this second edition of *Faith and Practice*. 
FOR MANY UNFAMILIAR WITH QUAKERS, the way we speak of our faith and the diversity of belief found among us may be perplexing. Even those who have been among Friends for a while may find it challenging to sort out our theology. This difficulty arises in part from the fact that the Society of Friends is not a single, homogeneous group but a large spiritual family with several branches that have evolved in different directions over the past three centuries. Another part of the challenge in understanding Quaker faith derives from our attitude toward creeds or other formal statements of faith. Friends do not make a written creedal statement the test of faith or the measure of suitability for membership.

The lack of a creed has sometimes led to the misconception that Friends do not have beliefs or that one can believe anything and be a Friend. However, most Quakers take the absence of a creed as an invitation and encouragement to exercise an extra measure of personal responsibility for the articulation of faith. Rather than rely on priests or professional theologians, each believer is encouraged to take seriously the personal disciplines associated with spiritual growth. Out of lives of reflection, prayer, faithfulness, and service flow the statements of belief, both in word and in deed, which belong to Friends. The reader will find many such examples in the sections which follow.

As one reads the statements of Friends in Faith and Practice and in the wealth of Quaker literature, of which these quotations are only a small sampling, patterns of belief appear. But it is only in careful, sustained observation of our work and ministry as individuals and as a community of faith that an understanding of Friends’ beliefs emerges with fullness and clarity. The brief generalizations offered here are no substitute for thorough study and reflection; at best they offer a few signposts which will draw one into a richer journey and remind one of deeper insights.

One central area of belief which has received considerable attention over the years is the relationship of Quakerism to Christianity. Whether one interprets the Quaker movement as a strand within Protestantism or as a third force distinct from both Protestantism and Catholicism, the movement, both in its origin and in the various branches which have evolved, is rooted in Christianity. However, from its inception it has offered both a critique of many accepted manifestations of Christianity and an empathy with people of faith beyond the bounds of Christianity. Some Friends have placed particular emphasis on the Gospel of Jesus Christ, while others have found more compelling a universal perspective emphasizing the Divine Light enlightening every person. One of the lessons of our own history as a religious movement is that an excessive reliance on one or the other of these perspectives, neglecting the essential connectedness between the two, has been needlessly divisive and has drawn us away from the vitality of the Quaker vision at its best.

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

Another area of Quaker belief and experience that deserves attention is the attitude of Friends toward the Bible. Friends find the Jewish and Christian writings which make up the Bible to be a rich and sustaining source of inspiration and a record of God’s revelation over many centuries. The Quaker movement began at a time when the Bible had recently come into wide circulation in England, and Friends drew greatly from it. George Fox and others knew the Bible well, studied it earnestly, and quoted it often. The inspiration of the scriptures was affirmed, but a distinction which has remained important to this day was also emphasized by early Friends. In Henry Cadbury’s words: “Divine revelation was not confined to the past. The same Holy Spirit which had inspired the scriptures in the past could inspire living believers centuries later. Indeed, for the right understanding of the past, the present insight
from the same Spirit was essential.” Thus, in emphasizing the power which gave forth the scriptures and the accessibility of this same power to us today, Friends have avoided making written records alone a final or infallible test. Instead we are invited to be drawn into that same spirit which gave forth the Bible, both in order to understand its contents and to be led in a continually maturing discovery of the ways of God.

Such discovery is fostered through the study, contemplation, and work of each individual, and these private acts of devotion and service in turn prepare us for the experience of corporate worship. Quaker worship in itself is a reflection of many of the most cherished beliefs of Friends. It is set in silence and thus reflects the importance we give to stilling ourselves and being centered in the Divine Presence. It emphasizes the immediate experience of the Divine in a community whose members share in a common journey and a common opportunity for participation and ministry. When we are blessed with a sense of gatheredness we often find the strength for approaching worshipfully the variety of tasks and challenges to which we return. Living worshipfully is an aim of recurring importance.

The absence of outward rites and ceremonies in Friends worship is a result of our emphasis on the reality of the inward experience. Desiring to avoid symbolism that may tend to supplant substance, we do not observe the traditional Christian sacraments. Instead Friends seek to view all of life as sacramental. In the pages which follow, the reader will find discussion of several other practices and testimonies which are of importance to Friends: simplicity, sincerity and integrity, equality and social justice, peace, and others. These outward testimonies flow from our faith and are in a sense fruits of the spirit. Our very name, the Religious Society of Friends, finds its source in Jesus’ statement (John 15:14-15) that “You are my friends, if you do what I command you. I shall not call you servants any more, because a servant does not know his master’s business; I call you friends, because I have made known to you everything I have learnt from my Father.” The inseparability of faith and practice is a truth which pervades both our past and our present.
OVER THE YEARS—in journals, in spoken ministry, and in other ways—Friends have put into words what they have experienced spiritually. Friends have never been restricted by dogma and thus have been free to embrace new knowledge as it shed light on their own evolving spiritual understanding. This growing understanding is reflected in the statements by Friends which follow.

**Spiritual Experiences**

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

George Fox, 1647

There was something revealed in me that the Lord would teach his people himself; and so I waited, and many things opened in me of a time at hand…. And as I did give up all to the Judgment, the captive came forth out of prison and rejoiced, and my heart was filled with joy, and I came to see him whom I had pierced, and my heart was broken … and then I saw the Cross of Christ, and stood in it … and so eternal life was brought in through death and judgment; and then the perfect gift I received … and the holy law of God was revealed unto me, and was written in my heart.

Francis Howgill, 1665

At last after all my distresses, wanderings and sore travels, 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…. 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. Yes, 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.” …

But some may desire to know what I have at last met with. I answer, “I have met with the Seed.” Understand that word, and thou wilt be satisfied and inquire no further. I have met with my God, I have met with my Saviour, and he hath not been present with me without his Salvation, but I have felt the healings drop upon my soul from under his wings.

Isaac Penington, 1667

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

Robert Barclay, 1676

In a time of sickness with the pleurisy, a little upward of two years and a half ago, I was brought
so near the gates of death that I forgot my name. Being then desirous to know who I was, I saw a
mass of matter of a dull gloomy color between the South and the East, and was informed that this
mass was human beings in as great misery as they could be, and live, and that I was mixed with them,
and that henceforth I might not consider myself as a distinct or separate being. In this state I
remained several hours. I then heard a soft melodious voice, more pure and harmonious than any
voice I had heard with my ears before; and I believed it was the voice of an angel who spoke to other
angels. The words were, John Woolman is dead. I soon remembered that I was once John Woolman
and being assured that I was alive in the body, I greatly wondered what that heavenly voice could
mean.... At length I felt Divine power prepare my mouth that I could speak, and then said, “I am
crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me. And the life I now live in
the flesh is by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me.” Then the mystery was
opened, and I perceived that there was joy in heaven over a sinner who had repented, and that that
language, John Woolman is dead, meant no more than the death of my own will.

John Woolman, 1772

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 together which did not begin with a hush of thanksgiving; we never
began a day without “a family gathering” at which my mother read a chapter of the Bible, after
which there would follow a weighty silence.... My first steps in religion were thus acted. It was a
religion 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 M. Jones, 1926

The night before landing in Liverpool I awoke in my berth with a strange sense of trouble and
sadness. As I lay wondering what it meant, I felt myself invaded by a Presence and held by the
Everlasting Arms. It was the most extraordinary experience I had ever had. But I had no intimation
that anything was happening to Lowell [his eleven-year-old son]. When we landed in Liverpool a
cable informed me that he was desperately ill, and a second cable, in answer to one from me,
brought the dreadful news that he was gone. When the news reached my friend John Wilhel
Rowntree, he experienced a profound sense of Divine Presence enfolding him and me, and his
comfort and love were an immense help to me in my trial.... I know now, as I look back across the
years, that nothing has carried me up into the life of God, or done more to open out the infinite
meaning of love, than the fact that love can span this break of separation, can pass beyond the
visible and hold right on across the chasm. The mystic union has not broken and knows no end.

Rufus M. Jones, 1947

Whenever we are driven into the depths of our own being, or seek them of our own will, we are
faced by a tremendous contrast. On the one side we recognize the pathetic littleness of ephemeral
existence, with no point or meaning in itself. On the other side, in the depth, there is something
eternal and infinite in which our existence, and indeed all existence, is grounded. This experience of
the depths of existence fills us with a sense both of reverence and of responsibility, which gives even
to our finite lives a meaning and a power which they do not possess in themselves. This, I am
assured, is our human experience of God.

John MacMurray, 1967

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

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

Helen Park, 1979

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

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

Patrice Haan, 1983

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

Molly Barnett, 1983

Faith

Now the Lord God opened to me by his invisible power, that every man was enlightened by the divine light of Christ, and I saw it shine through all; and they that believed in it came out of condemnation to the light of life, and became the children of it, but they that hated it, and did not believe it, were condemned by it, though they made a profession of Christ. This I saw in the pure openings of the Light, without the help of any man, neither did I then know where to find it in the Scriptures, though afterwards, searching the Scriptures, I found it. For I saw in that Light and Spirit which was before Scripture was given forth, and which led the holy men of God to give them forth, that all must come to that Spirit, if they would know God or Christ or the Scriptures aright.

George Fox, 1648

There is a spirit which I feel that delights to do no evil nor to revenge any wrong, but delights to endure all things, in hope to enjoy its own in the end. Its hope is to outlive all wrath and contention, and to weary out all exaltation and cruelty, or whatever is of a nature contrary to itself. It sees to the end of all temptations. As it bears no evil in itself, so it conceives none in thoughts to any other. If it is betrayed, it bears it, for its ground and spring is the mercies and forgiveness of God. Its crown is meekness, its life is everlasting love unfeigned; and takes its kingdom with entreaty and not with contention, and keeps it by meekness of mind. In God alone it can rejoice, though none else regard it, or can own its life. It’s conceived in sorrow, and brought forth without any to pity it, nor doth it murmur at grief and oppression. It never rejoiceth but through sufferings; for with the world’s joy it is murdered. I found it alone, being forsaken. I have fellowship therein with them who lived in dens and desolate places in the earth, who through death obtained this resurrection and eternal life.

James Nayler, 1660

Friends, the cross is the power of God. When you flee the cross, you lose the power…. Though the cross seems foolishness, stand in it … though it be a stumbling block to the wise, stand in it…. And this is not for you to be exercised in only for a time, as at your first convincement; but, daily, even to the death.

Priscilla Cotton, 1664

Conscience follows the judgment, doth not inform it; but this light as it is received, removes the blindness of the judgment, opens the understanding, and rectifies both the judgment and the
conscience. The conscience is an excellent thing where it is rightly informed and enlightened; wherefore some of us have fitly compared it to the lantern, and the light of Christ to the candle; a lantern is useful, when a clear candle burns and shines in it, but otherwise of no use. To the light of Christ then in the conscience, and not to man’s natural conscience, it is that we continually commend men.

Robert Barclay, 1676

That which the people called Quakers lay down as a main fundamental in religion is this, that God through Christ hath placed a principle in every man to inform him of his duty, and to enable him to do it; and that those that live up to this principle are the people of God, and those that live in disobedience to it are not God’s people, whatever name they may bear or profession they may make of religion. This is their ancient, first, and standing testimony. With this they began, and this they bore and do bear to the world.

William Penn, 1693

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

Thomas Story, 1737

In the love of money and in the wisdom of this world, business is proposed, then the urgency of affairs push forward, nor can the mind in this state discern the good and perfect will of God concerning us. The love of God as manifested is graciously calling us to come out of that which stands in confusion; but if we bow not in the name of Jesus, if we give not up those prospects of gain which in the wisdom of this world are open before us, but say in our hearts, “I must needs go on, and in going on I hope to keep as near to the purity of Truth as the business before me will admit of,” here the mind remains entangled and the shining of the light of life into the soul is obstructed.

John Woolman, 1772

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

John Woolman, 1774

They fail to read clearly the signs of the times who do not see that the hour is coming when, under the searching eye of philosophy and the terrible analysis of science, the letter and the outward evidence will not altogether avail us; when the surest dependence must be on the light of Christ within, disclosing the law and the prophets in our own souls, and confirming the truth of outward Scripture by inward experience.

John Greenleaf Whittier, 1870

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

Friends World Conference, 1952

The best type of religion is one in which the mystical, the evangelical, the rational, and the social are so related that each exercises a restraint on the others. Too exclusive an emphasis on mysticism results in a religion which is individualistic, subjective, and vague; too dominant an evangelicalism results in a religion which is authoritarian, creedal, and external; too great an emphasis on rationalism results in a cold intellectual religion which appeals only to the few; too engrossing a devotion to the social gospel results in a religion which, in improving the outer environment, ignores defects in the inner life which cause the outer disorder. In Quakerism the optimum is not equality in rank of the four elements. The mystical is basic. The Light Within occasions the acceptance or rejection of a particular authority, reason, or service.
Experience is the Quaker’s starting-point. This light must be my light, this truth must be my truth, this faith must be my very own faith. The key that unlocks the door to the spiritual life belongs not to Peter, or some other person, as an official. It belongs to the individual soul, that finds the light, discovers the truth, that sees the revelation of God and goes on living in the demonstration and power of it.

Rufus M. Jones, 1927

For God can be found…. There is a Divine Center into which your life can slip, a new and absolute orientation in God, a Center where you live with him and out of which you see all life, through new and radiant vision, tinged with new sorrows and pangs, new joys unspeakable and full of glory.

Thomas R. Kelly, 1938

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

Pacific Yearly Meeting, 1953

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

Pacific Yearly Meeting, 1967

This central affirmation, that the Light of the Christlike God shines in every person, implies that our knowledge of God is both subjective and objective. It is easy to misconstrue “Inner Light” as an invitation to individualism and anarchy if one concentrates on the subjective experience known to each one. But it is an equally important part of our faith and practice to recognize that we are not affirming the existence and priority of your light and my light, but of the Light of God, and of the God who is made known to us supremely in Jesus. The inward experience must be checked by accordance with the mind of Christ, the fruits of the Spirit, the character of that willed caring which in the New Testament is called Love.

It is further checked by the fact that if God is known in measure by every person, our knowledge of him will be largely gained through the experience of others who reverently and humbly seek him. In the last resort we must be guided by our own conscientiously held conviction—but it is in the last resort. First, we must seek carefully and prayerfully through the insights of others, both in the past and among our contemporaries, and only in the light of this search do we come to our affirmation.

L. Hugh Doncaster, 1972

For the mystery of faith is held in a pure conscience, that you may be led, guided, taught, and governed by this which cannot err, but is pure and eternal, and endureth for evermore.

Margaret Fell, 1668

The Scriptures

Concerning the Holy Scriptures, we do believe that they were given forth by the Holy Spirit of God, through the holy men of God, who (as the Scripture itself declares, 2 Peter 1:21) “spoke as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.” We believe they are to be read, believed, and fulfilled (he that fulfills them is Christ) and they are “profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, and for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works” (2 Timothy 3:16)....

George Fox, 1671
And so he went on and said, How that Christ was the Light of the world and lighteth every man that cometh into the world; and that by this Light they might be gathered to God, etc. And I stood up in my pew, and I wondered at his doctrine, for I had never heard such before. And then he went on, and opened the Scriptures, and said, “The Scriptures were the prophets’ words and Christ’s and the apostles’ words, and what as they spoke they enjoyed and possessed and had it from the Lord.” And said, “Then what had any to do with the Scriptures, but as they came to the Spirit that gave them forth. You will say, Christ saith this, and the apostles say this, but what canst thou say?” … This opened me so that it cut me to the heart…. And I cried in my spirit to the Lord, “We are all thieves, we are all thieves, we have taken the Scriptures in words and know nothing of them in ourselves.”

Margaret Fell, 1652

How much the Bible has to teach when taken as a whole, that cannot be done by snippets! There is its range over more than a thousand years giving us the perspective of religion in time, growing and changing, and leading from grace to grace. There is its clear evidence of the variety of religious experience, not the kind of strait jacket that nearly every church, even Friends, have sometimes been tempted to substitute for the diversity in the Bible. To select from it but a single strand is to miss something of its richness. Even the uncongenial and the alien to us is happily abundant in the Bible. The needs of men today are partly to be measured by their difficulty in understanding that with which they differ. At this point the Bible has no little service to render. It requires patient insight into the unfamiliar and provides a discipline for the imagination such as today merely on the political level is a crying need of our time.

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

Henry Joel Cadbury, 1953

Prayer

Prayer releases energy as certainly as the closing of an electric circuit does. It heightens all human capacities. It refreshes and quickens life. It unlocks reservoirs of power. It opens invisible doors into new storehouses of spiritual force for the person to live by and, as I believe, for others to live by as well. It is effective and operative as surely as are the forces of steam and gravitation.

Rufus M. Jones, 1918

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

Rufus M. Jones, 1931

As taught and practiced by Jesus, prayer is communion with God, in which mind and heart become open to his sustaining power and gladly and humbly submissive to his directing will.

The Lord’s Prayer is an example of the simple directness of the prayers of Jesus. One can meet God without an elaborate chain of words, even in the rush and tension of everyday life.

Prayer may be response to the beauty or grandeur of nature; to the courage and goodness sometimes revealed by the human spirit; to a desperate sense of need. Prayer may be inspired by joy and sorrow, illness and health, birth and death. Prayer may be without words or in the simplest
Through prayer, daily or special, he who prays can find serenity, humility, strength, courage and direction amid the stresses as well as the joys of life.

Prayer is an exercise of the mind and spirit. Its efficacy is increased by conscious practice. Prayer can work miracles by making individuals sensitive to the will of God and, through obedience, strong to accept or surmount the natural conditions of life.

Phillyadelphia Yearly Meeting, 1972

Stewardship

Of the interest of the public in our estates: Hardly anything is given us for our selves, but the public may claim a share with us. But of all we call ours, we are most accountable to God and the public for our estates: In this we are but stewards, and to hoard up all to ourselves is great injustice as well as ingratitude.

John Woolman, 1720

The important thing about worldly possessions, in fact, is whether or not we are tied to them. Some, by an undue love of the things of this world, have so dulled their hearing that a divine call to a different way of life would pass unheard. Others are unduly self-conscious about things which are of no eternal significance, and because they worry too much about them, fail to give of their best. The essence of worldliness is to judge of things by an outward and temporary, and not an inward and eternal standard, to care more about appearances than about reality, to let the senses prevail over the reason and the affections.

London Yearly Meeting, 1958
Our Faith In Practice

FOR FRIENDS, faith and practice are inseparable. Friends seek to apply this ideal to their personal lives and their lives in the wider world.

Our Personal Lives

Simplicity, Sincerity, and Integrity

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

George Fox, 1653

It's a dangerous thing to lead young Friends much into the observation of outward things, which may be easily done, for they can soon get into an outward garb, to be all alike outwardly, but this will not make them true Christians: it's the Spirit that gives life. I would be loath to have a hand in these things….

Margaret Fell Fox, 1698

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

John Woolman, c. 1744

I wish I might emphasize how a life becomes simplified when dominated by faithfulness to a few concerns. Too many of us have too many irons in the fire. We get distracted by the intellectual claim to our interest in a thousand and one good things, and before we know it we are pulled and hauled breathlessly along by an over-burdened program of good committees and good undertakings. I am persuaded that this fevered life of church workers is not wholesome. Undertakings get plastered on from the outside because we can’t turn down a friend. Acceptance of service on a weighty committee should really depend upon an answering imperative within us, not merely upon a rational calculation of the factors involved. The concern-oriented life is ordered and organized from within. And we learn to say No as well as Yes by attending to the guidance of inner responsibility. Quaker simplicity needs to be expressed not merely in dress and architecture and the height of tombstones but also in the structure of a relatively simplified and coordinated life-program of social
responsibilities. And I am persuaded that concerns introduce that simplification, and along with it that intensification which we need in opposition to the hurried, superficial tendencies of our age.

Thomas R. Kelly, 1941

For some there is a danger that care for the future may lead to undue anxiety and become a habit of saving for its own sake, resulting in the withholding of what should be expended for the needs of the family or devoted to the service of the Society. The temptation to trust in riches comes in many forms, and can only be withstood through faith in our Father and his providing care.

London Yearly Meeting, 1945

Poverty does not mean scorn for goods and property. It means the strict limitation of goods that are for personal use. It means the opposite of the reckless abuse and misuse of property that leaves our country spotted with the graveyards of broken and abandoned machinery. It means a horror of war, first because it ruins human life and health and the beauty of the earth, but second because it destroys goods that could be used to relieve misery and hardship and to give joy. It means a distaste even for the small carelessnesses that we see prevalent, so that beautiful and useful things are allowed to become dirty and battered through lack of respect for them. We have in America in this day the strange spectacle of many comely and well-equipped small homes kept in a state of neglect and disorder that would shock peasants anywhere.

Mildred Binns Young, 1956

Simplicity is cutting away all that is extraneous. Sincerity is being without sham. Integrity is being all of a piece. All of these are important parts of the Quaker testimony on simplicity.

A life centered in God will be characterized by integrity, sincerity, and simplicity. It need not be cloistered and may even be a busy life, but its activities and expressions should be correlated and directed toward the simple, direct purpose of keeping one’s communication with God open and unencumbered by that which is unessential. Simplicity is best approached through a right ordering of priorities.

Simplicity consists not in the use of particular forms but in avoiding self-indulgence, in maintaining humility of spirit, and in keeping the material surroundings of our lives directly serviceable to necessary ends. This does not mean that life need be poor and bare or destitute of joy and beauty. All forms of art may aid in the attainment of the spiritual life, and often the most simple lines, themes, or moments, when characterized by grace and directness, are the most beautiful.

Integrity, essential to all communication between one and another and between one and God, has always been a basic goal of Friends. Great care should be observed in speech. Factual statements should be as accurate as possible, without exaggeration or omission.

Friends regard the custom of taking oaths as not only contrary to the teachings of Jesus but as implying the existence of a double standard of truth. Thus, on all occasions when special statements are required, it is recommended that Friends take the opportunity to make simple affirmations, thus emphasizing that their statements are only a part of their usual integrity of speech.

Sexuality

Quakers, like others, in recent years have experienced a growing understanding and appreciation of human sexuality and its important role in our lives. In the words of the British Friends who wrote Towards a Quaker View of Sex:

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

Revised edition, 1964

In contrast to this recognition of vibrancy and beauty, there are lingering misunderstandings and ignorance about sexuality, especially in relation to our specifically sexual needs and urges. This can be harmful to people of all ages.
Fuller knowledge and understanding are sorely needed. Sex education is therefore important for everyone. Readily available information and open discussion of human sexuality are to be encouraged for both children and adults.

People experience their sexuality from the beginning of life and need to learn what this means to them. Parents and the Meeting can encourage children in their exploration of this meaning by constructively supporting the child’s natural interest in his or her own sexuality and in that of others. Parents teach their children primarily by the example of their lives together. Ideally they demonstrate mutual love, affection, consideration, and trust in a lasting relationship that includes sexual gratification and joy.

One aspect of sexuality which we are only beginning to understand is sexual orientation. Even as we begin to recognize that both heterosexual and homosexual orientations are a matter of fact, we affirm that all persons are valuable in the sight of God.

We are challenged to discipline our sexual behavior in the light of our growing awareness of overall sexuality. This concept includes keeping sexual behavior in the context of the total interpersonal relationship, rather than treating sexual activity as an end in and of itself. Casual, exploitative, or promiscuous sexual behavior can produce emotional and physical suffering and harm. In dealing with sexual matters, care and concern for others is no less important than care and concern for oneself.

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

Mary S. Calderone, 1973

Recreation

Recreation promotes spiritual well-being; it brings a needed balance into life and contributes wholeness of personality.

Simplicity directs the individual to choose those forms of recreation that rest and build up the body, that refresh and enrich mind and spirit. One should consider the proper expenditure of time, money, and strength and the moral and physical welfare of others as well as oneself. Healthful recreation includes games, sports, and other physical exercise; gardening and the study and enjoyment of nature; travel; books; the fellowship of friends and family; and the arts and handicrafts which bring creative self-expression and appreciation of beauty. Recreations in which one is a participant rather than merely a spectator are particularly beneficial.

Home and Children

Parents are the child’s first teachers. It is in the home that Friends’ principles first become practices. The home is founded upon love and depends constantly upon loving sympathy, understanding, and cooperation. Love binds the family together and yet allows freedom for each member to develop into the person he or she is meant to be. Loving guidance, constructive rather than authoritarian or possessive in its attitude, will help children discover their own potentialities and interests. Love reaches further than words and is understood long before words have meaning. The love of parents for God, for each other, and for their children, brings stability and security. This outpouring of the spirit creates the religious atmosphere of the home.

Hospitality in the home is a vital force in spiritual nurture. The contacts of parents with their children’s companions, and the child’s association with adult guests, are important influences. Parental attitudes toward neighbors and acquaintances are often reflected in the children. Family conversation may determine whether or not children will look for the good in the people they meet, and whether they will be sensitive to that of God in everyone.

The organization of the business of living so that there is time for companionship, for sharing the beauty and the wonder of small, everyday happenings, is an important responsibility of parents. A home that is not cluttered with too many possessions, where there is orderliness without a sense of constraint and where there is time for the family to enjoy one another, will help to develop well-integrated lives.

The home provides an opportunity for devotional reading and prayer. Many parents feel the need for times of daily worship. Children may not consciously feel this same need, but in everyday happenings they are often keenly
aware of the closeness of the Divine Spirit. Family worship is especially appropriate in hours of joy, sorrow, or special difficulty.

Children have much to teach us. If we cultivated the habit of dialogue and mutual learning, our children could keep us growing, and in a measure could bring us into their future, so that in middle age we would not stand on the sidelines bemoaning the terrible behavior and inconsiderateness of the younger generation.

Elizabeth Watson, 1975

Fulfilling the Later Years

The fulfillment of the later years depends in part on realizing that this time of life brings its own conditions, potentialities, and rewards, different from those of youth and of middle life. “Youth is for learning, the middle years for doing, and old age for enjoying” is the way one aged Friend put it. The later years are a time to relinquish some responsibilities, yet to accept others; to give up some activities but perhaps to discover new ones. It is a time to do things that had to be foregone earlier: to travel, develop a latent skill or avocation, explore an absorbing interest of the mind. It is a time to become freshly aware of the quiet fulfillment that lies in simple, everyday things: in making a well-ordered home; in meals shared; in the rewarding care of the bit of nature about one’s dwelling.

Yet the needed readjustments of this period of life can be very trying. It is hard to give up a long-time occupation, to fit our activities into a diminished allotment of strength, to bear with grace a wearing affliction. It is painful to move from an accustomed home to smaller quarters, able to accommodate only a portion of one’s familiar possessions. It takes deep faith and trust to readjust one’s life to the absence of a beloved partner.

Whatever our present trials or limitations, it is well to remember that the greatest goal and good of life remains always open to us: to love and enjoy God forever and to love one’s neighbor as oneself.

In its role as an “extended family,” a Meeting can do much to help its members meet and fulfill their later years. Older Friends often have more time than younger Friends to devote to Meeting needs. The Meeting should make full use of their experience, wisdom, and concern.

The relationship of older Friends to the Meeting does not end when they are no longer able to attend meetings. Older Friends, through the telephone, letter-writing, and prayer, may often continue to contribute vitally to the Meeting and to society. Through personal visits, as well as through these other ways, Friends, in turn, can keep older members in touch with the life of the Meeting. A Meeting will be rewarded by a mutual relationship in which younger Friends appreciate the presence and worth of the older Friends in their midst, and older Friends know that they are remembered, needed, cared for, and loved.

Living in the World

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

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

George Fox, 1656

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

Margaret Fell, 1660
My prison shall be my grave before I will budge a jot; for I owe my conscience to no mortal man; I have no need to fear, God will make amends for all.

William Penn, 1668

Answer the Witness of God in every man, whether they are the heathen that do not profess Christ, or whether they are such as do profess Christ that have the form of godliness and be out of the Power.

George Fox, 1672

The Cross of Christ … truly overcomes the world, and leads a life of purity in the face of its allurements; they that bear it are not thus chained up, for fear they should bite; nor locked up, lest they should be stole away; no, they receive power from Christ their Captain, to resist the evil, and do that which is good in the sight of God; to despise the world, and love its reproach above its praise; and not only not to offend others, but love those that offend them. . . . True godliness doesn’t turn men out of the world, but enables them to live better in it, and excites their endeavours to mend it; not hide their candle under a bushel, but set it upon a table in a candlestick.

William Penn, 1682

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

John Woolman, c. 1763

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

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

John Woolman, 1763

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

Howard Brinton, 1943

As Friends, we need to develop our spiritual lives so that we may become increasingly able to speak to “that of God” in those with whom we come in contact and to point out to them by our lives as well as our words that there is a power and a spirit within them that can make war impossible. We should show by our lives that they as well as we are responsible to this authority within, and none other.

Pacific Yearly Meeting, 1950

In spite of our varying degrees of emphasis on how our Peace Testimony should be expressed, there are many ways to peace. There are:

- Those who feel that we must seek inward peace first, as self purification.
- Those who are moved to radical personal and group action, and need the support of Meetings.
- Those who feel that as citizens of governments we still have opportunities to influence events.
We support Friends who are led to walk in any of these ways to peace.... We differ, yet we love each other.

Pacific Yearly Meeting, 1959

It is thought that realizes will. Only a thinking man can live. Only a thinking people can create history. Only a thinking kind can live in the midst of the dead.

The future always belongs to us. It is neither the working of nature, nor that of fate. It comes by our resolution.

Only a person who resolves not to be enslaved enjoys freedom.

Only a person who resolves not to assert his own enjoys freedom.

Only the person who resolves to love even at the cost of his own life can win love.

The first ingredient of life is courage.

The problem of today is not that of knowledge or technology. It is a spiritual problem. It is a question which requires a revolution in our outlook on life, on history, and on the nation.

The world today does not require an increase in technology, nor an easier access to its store of learning. It requires faith and spirit to overcome the present hurdle. The age calls for a new religion.

Ham Sok Hon, 1965

Equality and Social Justice

The principle of human equality before God is a cornerstone of Friends belief. Friends pioneered in recognizing the gifts and rights of women. Women were members and leaders of the early meetings, listened to and respected. Friends came more slowly to recognize the evil of slavery and of discrimination in general, and have often been guilty of the prejudices of the broader society. In recent years, however, they have taken increasingly clear stands against all forms of discrimination. As we continue to seek the light, habits and attitudes of a less sensitive past must increasingly give way to new understandings that affirm the value of all human beings.

And thus the Lord Jesus hath manifested himself and his Power, without respect of Persons; and so let all mouths be stopt that would limit him, whose Power and Spirit is infinite, that is pouring it upon all flesh.

Margaret Fell, 1666

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

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

Elizabeth Watson, 1975

Friends believe that everyone is a child of God and should relate to one another in those terms. Everyone must be regarded as of infinite worth and must be treated as a person who can be drawn by love to live a full and worthwhile life which manifests respect and consideration for others. When Friends are at their best, that love leads to unity in their meetings. It can also be effective in relations among all people.

Much fear, hatred and misunderstanding arise from thinking, talking, and acting in terms of groups—national, racial, religious, social, and others—rather than in terms of unique and precious individuals. The existence of groups is a fact; the Society of Friends is one. But just as diversity among Friends is vital and healthy when we approach each
other in a spirit of caring and humility, so it should become clear that diversity in the world as a whole can be healthy and vital if it is similarly accepted.

Each person should be free to cultivate individual characteristics and a sense of belonging to a group, so long as doing so does no violence to others. Identity with a group can be vitally important to an individual’s sense of worth and may allow the spirit to be freed and capacities to be developed. Similarly, groups must be free to develop characteristic differences, whether of religion, culture, language, or other valued distinguishing features—just as within the Society of Friends individual members are encouraged to develop their own abilities and beliefs, while feeling responsibility for encouraging similar development in others. When, however, differences become the basis for feelings of superiority or inferiority, they become barriers of hate and fear and keep people apart.

Group contacts begun in moods of fear, hostility, or exploitation have tended to become institutionalized in patterns that perpetuate domination and subjugation, injustice, and lack of respect. This is a source of the bitter problems of oppressed minorities of all kinds. As Friends wrestle with these problems, they are increasingly aware of the hampering effect of habitual patterns of thought and emotions, which frustrate their efforts to achieve right relations with fellow human beings in other groups. Friends must consciously strive to see the humanity in all persons and to cooperate with efforts to overcome handicaps and injustices.

Friends have worked with groups who have been victimized by prejudice and exploitation. This work has been difficult because of resistance by the prejudiced and by the exploiters, some of whom are included in the membership of the Society of Friends. Friends should recognize that prejudices are very prevalent and that the problem of prejudice is complicated by advantages that have come to some at the expense of others. Exploitation impairs the human quality of the exploiter as well as of the exploited.

Enunciation of the principle of equality among human beings in the sight of God is important and necessary, but it is not sufficient. Realization of equality involves such matters as independence and control of one’s own life. Therefore, Friends must aid the efforts of the exploited to attain self-determination and social, political, and economic justice, and to change attitudes and practices formerly taken for granted.

The goal of good human relations is a community in which each individual and each group can feel sure of opportunities for self-development, full realization of potential, and rewarding relations with others.

Peace

Friends’ peace testimony arises from the power of Christ working in people’s hearts. Since there is that of God in every person, Friends believe that every person is worthy of infinite respect. Our words and lives should testify to this belief and should stand as a positive witness in a world still torn by strife and violence. The Society of Friends has consistently held that war is contrary to the spirit of Christ and stated its position clearly in the Declaration to Charles II in 1660:

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

George Fox, 1651

We base our peace testimony on a fundamental conviction that war is wrong in the sight of God.

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

Since our first allegiance is to the God of love, we must obey the law of God rather than human law when this allegiance is challenged by the demands of the state. We support those who oppose war by performing work as conscientious objectors and those who resist any cooperation with the military. We hold in love, but disagree with,
those of our members who feel that they must enter the armed forces. We recognize that the entire military system is inconsistent with Jesus Christ’s example of love. We work toward the day when armaments and conscription will no longer be tolerated.

Since our peace testimony is not only opposition to active participation in war but a positive affirmation of the power of good to overcome evil, we must all seriously consider the implications of our employment, our investments, our payment of taxes, and our manner of living as they relate to violence. We must become sensitive to the covert as well as the overt violence inherent in some of our long-established social practices and institutions, and we must attempt to change those elements which violate that of God in everyone.

Our historic peace testimony must be also a living testimony as we work to give concrete expression to our ideals. We would alleviate the suffering caused by war. We would refrain from participating in all forms of violence and repression. We would make strenuous efforts to secure international agreements for the control of armaments and to remove the domination of militarism in our society. We would seek to be involved in building national and transnational institutions to deal with conflict nonviolently.

The almost unimaginable devastation that results from modern war makes ever more urgent its total elimination.

**The Individual and the State**

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

Pacific Yearly Meeting, 1953

The attitude of Friends toward the state is conditioned by the fact that the state presents two different aspects. When it acts as a coercive agency resorting to violence, it does not conform to Quaker principles. On the other hand, as a necessary instrument for maintaining an orderly society with justice under law for all and for meeting human needs, the state commands respect and cooperation.

Friends are not opposed to all forms of coercion. Proper police activities, incidental to carrying out the rightful purposes of the state and directed solely against persons who refuse to abide by the law, seem necessary and helpful. From its earliest days, however, the Society has held that war is contrary to the will of God, and it has counseled its members to refuse to bear arms or to accept membership in military forces.

As the state becomes more and more responsible for advancing human welfare, members of the Society are increasingly called upon for a variety of civic duties, especially in those areas that have long been among their chief concerns. Through the ballot, by public witness, and in many other ways, Friends may contribute to an enlightened and vigorous public opinion, thus helping to direct public policy toward the fulfillment of Quaker principles. Men and women of intelligence, high principle, and courage are needed to combat the ignorance, self-interest, and cowardice that impede the wise solution of national and international problems.

Integrity and diligence are of the utmost importance in the holding of public office. Qualified Friends should not allow matters of preference or convenience to deter them from this service. The seeming necessity for action by public authorities, however, may sometimes present difficult problems to the officeholder who seeks to be single-minded in loyalty to God. While a prayerful search for divine guidance may lead to a suitable adjustment, it may become necessary, as Friends have sometimes found in the past, to sacrifice position to conscience and expediency to principle.

For those not holding public office, there is a wide field for voluntary public service in agencies and organizations that work for civic betterment.

From their earliest days Friends have counseled obedience to the state except when the law or ruling involved appears to be contrary to divine law. Therefore, when they have engaged in civil disobedience they have done so as a matter of conscience.

Obedience to the state is subject to the religious principle that primary allegiance is to God. The state has no claim to moral infallibility. If its command appears to be contrary to divine law, Friends can only take prayerful counsel to arrive at a Quaker decision. This usually involves testing one’s proposed action by the judgment of the Meeting. When the decision is to refuse obedience to a law or order of the state, in accordance with the dictates of conscience, it is usual for Friends to act openly and to make clear the grounds of their action.
If the decision involves incurring legal penalties, Friends generally have suffered willingly and fearlessly for the sake of their convictions. Friends not personally involved strengthen the Meeting community by supporting their fellow members with spiritual encouragement and, when necessary, with material aid.
Advices and Queries

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

William Penn, 1692

FRIENDS BEGAN TO USE QUERIES to ascertain the state of Society only a few years after its founding in England. The first set of such questions to be asked of monthly meetings read as follows:

Which Friends in service to the Society, in their respective regions, departed this life since the last Yearly Meeting?

Which Friends, imprisoned on account of their testimony, died in prison since the last Yearly Meeting?

How among Friends did Truth advance since last Yearly Meeting and how do they fare in relation to peace and unity?

By 1700 the practice of answering in writing had begun. The list of queries soon was enlarged to make inquiries concerning the conduct of meetings. In 1791 the first general advices were adopted. Periodic revisions occurred in various Yearly Meetings; queries and advices were developed on discipline, evangelical soundness, moral and spiritual instruction, social responsibility, and ministry. Thus the queries and advices represent a continuing exploration of our common faith and practice.

The advices and queries are a reminder of the basic faith and principles held to be essential to the life and witness of the Religious Society of Friends. Each of us is therefore asked to consider how far the advices and queries affect us personally, and where our service lies. We may be disheartened at times because the ideal of Christian discipleship seems impossibly demanding. However, we should all remember that we are to seek it, not with our own strength, but with the strength of the Guide whom we follow.

The advices and queries are intended for use in Monthly Meetings as well as for personal devotions. Their use varies in Meetings according to the needs of the members. Many Meetings read and consider one or several of the queries, with appropriate advices or other material, once a month during business meetings or in other meetings. Meeting committees may find certain queries helpful in evaluating their activities. Meetings often publish the queries regularly in their newsletters. They offer a basis for Monthly Meeting’s annual report on the state of the Society.

While the advices and queries are divided into categories for convenience of consideration, Friends are reminded that the sections are part of a whole, as life itself is a unity. All aspects of life are holy; distinct lines cannot be drawn between secular and religious.

Worship

The heart of the life of the Religious Society of Friends is the Meeting for Worship. It calls for us to offer ourselves, body, mind, and soul for the doing of God’s will.

Worship is the adoring response of the heart and mind to the influence of the Spirit of God. It stands neither in forms nor in the formal disuse of forms; it may be with or without words, but it must be in spirit and in truth (John 4:24). We recognize the value of silence, not as an end, but as a means toward the attainment of the end, which is communication with God, and fellowship with one another.
In all our Meetings for Worship, we gather in a spirit of prayerful obedience to God, with a willingness to give as well as to receive. In speech or in silence, each person contributes to the Meeting. Worshiping God together, we strengthen one another, and our bodies and minds are refreshed in the Life of the Spirit. Our daily lives are linked with the Meeting for Worship, the Meeting for Worship with our daily lives. Friends are encouraged to give adequate time for study, meditation and prayer, and other ways of preparing for worship, and to arrive at Meeting promptly with an open and expectant spirit. During the Meeting for Worship, some people may feel moved to speak, to share an insight, to pray, to praise. When we feel led to speak, we should do so, clearly and simply. When another speaks, we should listen with an open spirit, seeking the thought behind the words and holding the speaker in love. After a message has been given, Friends should have time to ponder its meaning and to search themselves before another speaks.

How do we prepare our hearts and minds for worship?

Do we meet in expectant waiting for the promptings of the Divine Spirit? Is there a living silence in which we are drawn together by the power of God in our midst? Is this inspiration carried over into our daily living?

Is the vocal ministry exercised under the leading of the Holy Spirit without prearrangement, and in the simplicity and sincerity of truth? As we listen, or as we speak, are we guided by the Inward Light and sensitive to one another’s needs? Are we careful not to speak at undue length or beyond our light?

Business Meeting

Friends’ way of conducting business is of central importance to the very existence of the Meeting. It is the Quaker way of living and working together; it is the way that can create and preserve a sense of fellowship in the Meeting community. The right conduct of Business Meetings, even in matters of routine, is a vital part of the worship experience. The process of individuals submitting themselves to the corporate revelation of God’s truth forms the basis of Friends’ approach to unity.

All members are encouraged to attend Business Meetings and be faithful in the service of the Meeting’s affairs. Appointments of officers and committee members should be made with careful consideration of the qualifications of those named and of the opportunities for growth that may be afforded. Friends should not accept any service to which they are nominated without an accompanying sense of leading and a capacity for the task, nor should they lightly refuse such service.

Proceed in the peaceable spirit of the light of Truth, with forbearance and warm affection for each other.

Be willing to wait upon God as long as may be necessary for the emergence of a decision which clearly recommends itself as the right one.

Feel free to express views, but refrain from pressing them unduly.

Guard against contentiousness, obstinacy and love of power. Admit the possibility of being in error.

In Meetings for Business, and in all duties connected with them, seek the leadings of the Light.

Are our Meetings for Business held in the spirit of a Meeting for Worship in which we seek divine guidance for our actions in love and mutual forbearance?

How well do our Meetings for Business lead to a corporate search for and revelation of God’s truth?

How effectively do members of the Meeting participate in the tempering and strengthening of the leading of individuals?

As difficult problems arise, are we careful to meet them in a spirit of love and humility with minds open for creative solutions? Do we avoid pressure of time, neither unnecessarily prolonging or unduly curtailing full discussion?

Are we aware that we speak through inaction as well as action?

Are we prepared to let go of our individual desires and let the Holy Spirit lead us to unity?
Do we recognize that the search for unity may require us to accept with good grace a decision of the Meeting with which we are not entirely in agreement?

In what ways do we each take our share of responsibility in the service of the Meeting?

Are younger Friends, new members, and attenders given appropriate responsibility in the Meeting?

**Participation in the Life of the Meeting**

The life of the Meeting depends upon varied gifts.

There are varieties of Gifts, but the same Spirit. There are varieties of service, but the same Lord. There are many forms of work, but all of them, in all men, are the work of the same God. In each of us the Spirit is manifested in one particular way, for some useful purpose. One man, through the Spirit, has the gift of wise speech, while another, by the power of the same Spirit, can put the deepest knowledge into words. Another, by the same Spirit, is granted faith; another, by the one Spirit, gifts of healing, and another miraculous powers; another has the gift of prophecy, and another the ability to distinguish true spirits from false; yet another has the gift of ecstatic utterance of different kinds, and another the ability to interpret it. But all these gifts are the work of one and the same Spirit, distributing them separately to each individual at will.

1 Corinthians 12:4-11

The Meeting is enriched when all members and attenders participate actively. The working of the Holy Spirit in our lives is expressed through prophetic ministry, pastoral caring for each other, and the example provided by lives lived in the Light.

In the active life of the Meeting, an individual’s leadings are tempered and strengthened by the corporate spirit. All members have responsibility for participation in, and the financial support of, the Meeting.

Attenders are encouraged to become acquainted with Friends’ ways, and to apply for membership when it is evident that the Meeting has become their spiritual home.

When Meeting for Worship has a central place in one’s life, regular and punctual attendance follows. We hold in the Light those who are unable to attend by reason of infirmity, or imprisonment, distance, or other stresses in their lives.

Do we each take an active part in the life of our Meeting? How do we recognize the varied skills and spiritual gifts of our members and attenders? How do we nurture their use and growth?

In what ways are we bringing together members and attenders, young and old, in love and community? Do we visit one another in our homes and keep in touch with distant members?

How are strangers made to feel welcome in our midst? How do we encourage attenders to share in Meeting activities and responsibilities and to consider membership when they are ready?

**Unity**

Different ways of understanding the divine life may occur among us. These differences should not be ignored for the sake of a superficial agreement. They should be recognized and understood, so that a deeper and more vital unity can be reached. Convictions which might divide or disrupt a Meeting can, through God’s grace, help to make it creative and strong. Friends should keep faith and fellowship with each other, waiting in the Light for that unity which draws them together in the love and power of God.

When problems and conflicts arise, do we make timely endeavors to resolve them in a spirit of love and humility? How do we use our diversity for the spiritual growth of our Meeting?

Are we prepared to let go of our individual desires and let the Holy Spirit lead us to unity?

**Mutual Care**

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

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

Are we charitable with each other? How careful are we of the reputation of others? Do we avoid hurtful criticism and gossip?

Do we practice the art of listening to one another, even beyond words?

How well are we able to love each other unconditionally?

Are we sensitive to each other’s personal needs and difficulties and do we assist in useful ways?

Family

It is important to live in the sense of assurance that all are children of God. In the eyes of our children, in the loving expression among adults, in the concern we have for the well-being of all in the Meeting family, we feel God’s love at work on earth.

Ideally, family is an expression of deep emotional and spiritual unity. Whatever its composition, it is a precious and sometimes tenuous bonding of people, and may bring anguish as well as joy.

We usually think of family as including parents and children. But family may also include aging parents in increasing need of care, persons not related by blood who are intimately connected with one’s household, and persons joined together to satisfy a common need. Families also include single parents and their children, couples without children, and couples, heterosexual or homosexual, living in committed relationships. For those without families, including those made single after years of marriage or other life commitment, the Meeting may provide some sense of family. The Meeting may be a source of love and care for all those associated with it.

The Meeting can support, yet does not replace, the family in the care of children. At the same time, every member of Meeting is responsible in some measure for the care of families and their members, including children. Given this sense of common concern, our families may gain a sense of belonging and commitment to the expanded family of Quakers, and to our heritage.

Do we take care that commitments outside the home do not encroach upon the time and loving attention the family needs for its health and well-being?

Does our home life support our need both for a sense of personal identity and fully shared living?

How do we make our homes places of friendliness, peace, and renewal, where God is real for those who live there and those who visit?

Is there a climate of love and trust in our Meeting which invites and encourages everyone to be open about individual and family lifestyles, including their satisfactions and problems?

How does the Meeting support families of all kinds in their attempts to improve communication, family life, and the rearing of children in a context of love?

Do we accept and support Friends in their efforts to have stable, loving relationships, whether heterosexual or homosexual? Do we acknowledge and support all relationships based on love?

How do we offer strength and support to the aging, the widowed, the separated or divorced, and others in families that have been affected by disruption of some kind?

How do we help the Meeting give a sense of spiritual kinship to those who participate in it?

Religious Education

The Bible and other religious literature are the rightful heritage of us all, and study and discussion in the family are a valuable source of religious training. Yet the written word has little meaning unless it leads to the expression of personal religious experience, which is the work of the Spirit behind the word. As individuals and families we must show our children and each other that our search for truth involves every aspect of life.

In what ways does our Meeting help to develop the spiritual lives of our children and of all of our
members and attenders?

Do we provide our children and young adults with a framework for active, ongoing participation in Meeting?

How do we encourage our children to participate actively in Meeting?

How do we share our deepest beliefs with our children and with one another? What influences among us tend to develop our religious life?

Peace

Peace is the state in which we are in accord with God, the earth, others, and ourselves. We know that true, lasting peace among us can finally be attained only through unity in the life of the spirit. We work to create the conditions of peace, such as freedom, justice, cooperation, and the right sharing of the world’s resources.

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

Do we live in the virtue of that life and power which takes away the occasion of all war?

Do we refrain from taking part in war as inconsistent with the spirit of Christ?

What are we doing to remove the causes of war and to bring about the conditions of peace? Where there are hatred, division, and strife, how are we instruments of reconciliation and love?

How do we communicate to others an understanding of the basis of our peace testimony?

As we work for peace in the world, are we nourished by peace within ourselves?

Equality

People everywhere are children of God and members of one family. We value the worth of each person. We cannot be easy in our own lives when others suffer indignity, injustice, or want. In the Spirit of Christ, we are ready to put ourselves at one another’s side and share each other’s burdens. As we are true to the Divine within ourselves, we respond to the Divine in others.

Do we speak to and answer “that of God” in everyone?

In all our relations with others, are we sensitive to issues of equality, autonomy, and power? How do we challenge destructive patterns in these relationships when they arise? How do we encourage ourselves and others to consider people as individuals, rather than as stereotypes?

What are we doing about the injustices which are part of our social and economic life? How do we help those who suffer from discrimination?

Do we avoid being drawn into violent reactions against those who are destructive of human dignity?

Do we reach out to the violator as well as the violated with courage and love?

Do we search diligently for ways of assuring the right of every individual to be loved, cared for, and educated appropriately, to obtain useful employment; and to live in dignity?

Witness

We are glad to tell in words as well as deeds the faith that is in us. We seek fellowship with others of our own faith and with all people, realizing the oneness of humanity under God. Our witness is characterized by humility and a willingness to learn from others so that differences can be transcended. In discussion, we must not allow the strength of our convictions to betray us into making misleading or contentious statements. The experiences of others, especially those in circumstances different from our own, help us to discover what is true for us and may help us sense real kinship. We are constantly reminded that Truth is greater than the knowledge any of us has of it. God did not put all the fruit on one branch.

How do our lives testify to our convictions as Friends? What are we doing to share our faith? How
do we practice listening to the Truth which may be revealed by others?

What ways do we find to cooperate with persons and groups with whom we share beliefs and concerns? Do we reach out with love and respect to those with whom we disagree?

What are we doing to make the larger community aware of our Friends Meeting?

Civic Responsibility

We value the part we have in shaping the laws of our country. It is our task to see that these laws serve God’s purposes. Our aim is the building of a social order which works toward the kingdom of God. We affirm our unchanging conviction that our first allegiance is to God, and if this conflicts with any compulsion of the state, we serve our country best by remaining true to our higher loyalty.

If, by divine leading, our attention is focused on a law contrary to divine law, we must proceed with care. Before making a decision, we pray for further divine guidance; we consult with others who might be affected by our decision. When clearness on the decision has been reached, we act with conviction. If our decision involves disobedience to the law, we make the grounds of our action clear to all concerned. If there are penalties, we must suffer them without evasion. We care for those who suffer for conscience’s sake.

Are we conscientious in fulfilling obligations to the state and society while opposing those contrary to our understanding of the leadings of God?

What are we doing as individuals and as a Meeting to carry our share of responsibility for the government of our community, state, and nation, and for the development of needed international organizations? How are we working for changes in government when change is needed?

To what extent are we interested in the schools of our community and concerned to establish practices in them consistent with the values we cherish as Friends?

Do we share our convictions in a spirit of loving concern?

Stewardship

John Woolman’s simple statement in A Word of Remembrance and Caution to the Rich (1793) may serve as a beginning for all consideration of stewardship: “As Christians, all we possess is the gift of God, and in the distribution of it we act as his stewards; it becomes us therefore to act agreeably to that divine wisdom which he graciously gives to his servants.”

The principle of stewardship thus applies to all that we have and are, as individuals, as members of groups, and as inhabitants of the earth. As individuals, we are obliged to use our time, our various abilities, our strength, our money, our material possessions, and other resources in a spirit of love, aware that we hold these gifts in trust, and are responsible to use them in the Light. As Friends, and as members of other groups, we seek to apply the same spirit to the use and contribution of our corporate resources. As people, we are obliged to cherish the earth and to protect all its resources in a spirit of humble stewardship, committed to the right sharing of these resources among people everywhere.

“To turn all we possess into the channel of universal love becomes the business of our lives”—this, in the words of Woolman, is the meaning of Quaker stewardship.

Do we regard our time, talents, energy, money, material possessions, and other resources as gifts from God, to be held in trust and shared according to the Light we are given? How do we express this conviction?

What are we doing as individuals and as a Meeting to use and thereby perfect our gifts? How do we encourage others to use theirs?

How do we exercise our respect for the balance of nature? Are we careful to avoid poisoning the land, air, and sea and to use the world’s resources with care and consideration for future generations and with respect for all life?

In what other ways do we carry out our commitment to stewardship?
Simplicity

Quaker simplicity is one of the fruits of a primary commitment to the Spirit of God. Writing of simplicity, Thomas Kelly reminds us, “Life is meant to be lived from a Center, a divine Center—a life of unhurried peace and power. It is simple. It is serene. It takes no time, but it occupies all our time.”

Friends are advised to strive for simplicity in the use of their earnings and property, and in their style of living, choosing that which is simple and useful. This does not mean that life is to be poor and bare, destitute of joy and beauty. All that promotes fullness of life and aids in service for God is to be accepted with thanksgiving. Each must determine by the light that is given what promotes and what hinders the compelling search for inner peace.

Do we center our lives in the awareness of the presence of God so that all things take their rightful place?

Do we keep our lives uncluttered with things and activities, and avoid commitments beyond our strength and light? Is the life of our Meeting so ordered that it helps us simplify our personal lives?

Do we order our individual lives so as to nourish our spiritual growth?

Are we alert to the dangers and unfairness of gambling, and of games of chance?

Are our lives so filled by the Spirit that we are free of the need to indulge in the addictive use of tobacco, alcohol, and other drugs, or excesses of any kind? Do we choose recreations which strengthen our physical, mental, and spiritual lives and avoid those which may prove harmful to ourselves and others?

Do we keep to a single standard of truth, so that we are free from the use of judicial and other oaths?

Are we punctual in keeping promises, prompt in the payment of debts, and just and honorable in all our dealings? Do we keep to simplicity, moderation and honesty in our speech, our manner of living, and our daily work?
Membership

Now the Lord God hath opened to me by his invisible power how that every man was enlightened by the divine light of Christ; and I saw it shine through all, and that they that believed in it came out of condemnation and came to the light of life, and became children of it, but they that hated it, and did not believe in it, were condemned by it, though they made a profession of Christ. This I saw in the pure openings of the Light without the help of any man, neither did I then know where to find it in the Scriptures; though afterwards, searching the Scriptures, I found it. For I saw in that Light and Spirit which was before Scripture was given forth, and which led the holy men of God to give them forth, that all must come to that Spirit, if they would know God, or Christ, or the Scriptures aright, which they that gave them forth were led and taught by.

George Fox, 1648

Mind that which is pure in one another which joins you together, for nothing will join or make fit but what is pure, nor unite nor build but what is pure.

George Fox, 1652

And oh, how sweet and pleasant it is to the truly spiritual eye to see several sorts of believers, several forms of Christians in the school of Christ, every one learning their own lesson, performing their own peculiar service, and knowing, owning, and loving one another in their several places and different performances to their Master, to whom they are to give an account, and not quarrel with one another about their different practices.

Isaac Penington, 1659

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

Thomas Story, 1737

The Society [of Friends] from the first to the last has affirmed that the spirit of man is the place of all others in which the spirit of God can shine…. It has always insisted that each individual is responsible for obeying this light, and that the whole of life ought to be brought under the dominion of the Spirit.

William Charles Braithwaite, 1909

There are certain broad principles of belief and conduct that afford a basis for an association in and through which living membership can find expression. In the case of our own Society unity is essential upon the spiritual and practical nature of Christianity-the deep and penetrating reality of worship and the claim of Christ to rule our whole life, both inward and outward.

London Yearly Meeting, 1931

The test for membership should not be doctrinal agreement, nor adherence to certain testimonies, but evidence of sincere seeking and striving for Truth, together with an understanding of the lines along which Friends are seeking that Truth.

Friends World Conference, 1952

The Inward Light is a universal light given to all men, religious consciousness itself being basically the same wherever it is found. Our difficulties come when we try to express it. We cannot express; we can only experience God. Therefore we must always remember tolerance, humility, and tenderness with others whose ways and views may differ from ours.
Our membership of this, or any other Christian fellowship, is never based on worthiness.... We none of us are members because we have attained a certain standard of goodness, but rather because, in this matter, we still are all humble learners in the school of Christ. Our membership is of no importance whatever unless it signifies that we are committed to something of far greater and more lasting significance than can adequately be conveyed by the closest association with any movement or organization. Our membership of the Society of Friends should commit us to the discipleship of the living Christ. When we have made that choice and come under that high compulsion, our membership will have endorsed it.

Edgar G. Dunstan, 1956

The nature of their purpose and quest as Friends binds members of a Meeting and of the whole Society into an intimate fellowship whose unity is not threatened by the diversity of leadings and experiences which may come to individual Friends. To share in the experience of the Presence in corporate worship, to strive, conscious that other Friends are also striving, to let the Divine Will guide one’s life, to live in a sense of unfailing Love reaching out to the stumbling followers of Christ is to participate in a spiritual adventure in which Friends come to know one another and to respect one another at a level where superficial differences of age or sex, of wealth or position, of education or vocation, of race or nation are all irrelevant. Within this sort of fellowship, as in a family, griefs and joys, fears and hopes, failures and accomplishments are naturally shared, even as individuality and independence are scrupulously respected.

New England Yearly Meeting, 1966

“George Fox and his early followers,” wrote Rufus Jones, “went forth with unbounded faith and enthusiasm to discover in all lands those who were true fellow-members with them in this great household of God, and who were the hidden seed of God.” Our Society thus arose from a series of mutual discoveries of men and women who found that they were making the same spiritual pilgrimage. This is still our experience today. Even at times of great difference of opinion, we have known a sense of living unity, because we have recognised one another as followers of Jesus. We are at different stages along the way. We use different language to speak of him and to express our discipleship. The insistent questioning of the seeker, the fire of the rebel, the reflective contribution of the more cautious thinker—all have a place amongst us. This does not always make life easy. But we have found that we have learned to listen to one another, to respect the sincerity of one another’s opinions, to love and to care for one another. We are enabled to do this because God first loved us. The gospels tell us of the life and teaching of Jesus. The light of Christ, a universal light and known inwardly, is our guide. It is the grace of God which gives us the strength to follow. It is his forgiveness which restores us when we are oppressed by the sense of falling short. These things we know, not as glib phrases, but out of the depths of sometimes agonising experience.

London Yearly Meeting, 1968

The Religious Society of Friends is a community of Faith based on a shared experience of the “Inward Light,” “the Spirit of Christ by which we are guided.” Together Friends worship and grow in the Spirit, committed to following the life and teachings of Jesus and to being ever open and obedient to the Power within. Becoming a member is the process whereby the individual and the community are drawn together in mutual search and understanding. Membership is the outward recognition of an inner experience of the Living God and of unity with other members of the Society of Friends. In hearkening to that of God within themselves, Friends have come to recognize “that of God in everyone.”

* These are expressions used frequently by George Fox, but various terms have been used by Friends in trying to describe their experience of the divine Life at the heart of the universe: Holy Spirit, Light Within, Light of Christ, Living God, God, Word, Truth, Power, Seed, True Silence, Divine Spirit, The Eternal, The Divine Principle, Grace, Presence.

Although regularly enrolled membership, as we know it, was not a feature of the early Society of Friends, a recognized membership did exist. In its first years the Society was a radical and charismatic movement, very much at odds with the civil and religious institutions of its day. Joining with Friends involved rejection by contemporary society, as well as the risk of imprisonment, physical abuse and economic ruin. Only those deeply convinced and committed were willing to face such consequences and be considered Friends and members of the fellowship. Nevertheless early problems with fanaticism and spiritual irresponsibility led to the practice of disownment. Those

NPYFM Faith and Practice – Membership – page 35
who from emotional instability or lack of understanding misrepresented the Society in word or deed were, if reconciliation was not successful, disowned by Friends with a public declaration that the disowned person did not represent the Society of Friends. Such persons were still welcomed to worship and fellowship, but were not allowed to participate in the meeting for business. Disownment later became greatly abused in enforcing a strict and rigid code of Quaker conduct.

Though the word “member” appears in early Friends’ correspondence and lists of those suffering for Truth’s sake were drawn up almost from the beginning, formal membership was not established until the eighteenth century. By that time, when the Society of Friends had become respectable and some persons came to it solely for the material support it offered, the first lists of members were drawn up to identify those committed to Truth and entitled to support by the Meeting. At the same time the practice of enrolling children of Friends as “birthright members” was also begun. Such membership has been almost entirely discontinued in the twentieth century, as it is felt more in keeping with Friends’ practices for children to make their own decisions about membership upon reaching adulthood.

Membership in the Religious Society of Friends involves continuing commitment. It implies a readiness and desire to join in the common effort of the Society to seek and follow the Inner Light, as well as some experience and understanding of that Spirit as it is known by Friends—a reality which guides and directs, which gives strength to act upon this guidance and which brings unity with the spirit of God. Decision-making by Friends depends upon a common understanding of the guidance of the Spirit as they unite in worship for Meeting for Business. Membership involves a desire to attend regularly meetings for worship and business, to give service through committees, and otherwise as the way opens, and to share in financial responsibilities. Members are the final voices in the meeting for business. Members are the Friends formally recognized by the larger society. When Friends are called to civil disobedience, it is the members who bear the consequences. Members are the immediate family of the Society, and although all those associated with a Meeting fall under its loving care, it is for the membership that the Meeting is primarily responsible.

The Society of Friends desires to include in its membership all persons who find themselves in unity with its faith and practices or are committed to growing toward that unity. Since the admission of members is the responsibility of the Monthly Meeting, membership, in practice, means that the applicant should come to know the aspirations and ways of a particular Meeting and be prepared to share in the responsibilities, difficulties and joys of its fellowship. Those who relate to the Meeting so that they are able to help the Meeting and be helped by it are likely to be qualified to become members. Under appropriate circumstances, an application for membership may be considered from an otherwise qualified applicant living at a distance from the Meeting. (See page ___.) Membership in a Monthly Meeting also includes membership in the Quarterly Meeting and Yearly Meeting of which the Monthly Meeting is a part, and in the world-wide Religious Society of Friends.

Our fellowship with all seekers, and our relationship to a particular Meeting, should not cause us to overlook our identity as Friends. It is the duty of the Meeting to insure that a prospective member has some knowledge of the wider body of Friends, as there is great diversity in the practices and beliefs of the various branches of the Society. Everyone should be aware that differences do exist and, more importantly, understand the common faith and experience that unites all Friends, everywhere. A Friend should be able to sense the presence of God in any Meeting visited and a Meeting should be comfortable welcoming Friends of all persuasions.

Religious experience is profoundly important to Friends who traditionally allow considerable freedom in describing their common religious life and experience. The Society of Friends is, however, part of the Christian fellowship, as Friends understand Christianity. Friends are aware that religious truth, the encounter with the Spirit of God, or the experience of Christ comes to different persons in somewhat different ways and that seekers find themselves in various stages of growth in their experience of the divine and in the words they use to express this. An open heart and mind and an earnest desire for ever-increasing Light is of chief concern. While readiness for membership implies a degree of religious insight, it does not assume attainment of perfection or an end to development. Participation in the life of the Meeting and living daily by the Spirit result in continuing religious growth.

**Members and Attenders**

The Society of Friends values the presence and participation of all persons drawn to Friends and encourages faithful attenders to seek membership, which may contribute to the further development of their religious lives. The Committee on Oversight should be sensitive to an attender who is approaching readiness for membership, as indicated by increased interest in, participation in and understanding of Meeting affairs. The Committee should offer to discuss
the possibility of membership with the attender, and attenders who feel ready to consider membership should not hesitate to talk with a member of the Committee on Oversight or to write a letter applying for membership.

Customarily, regular attenders are listed in the Meeting’s Directory.

Members have an obligation to attend and take part in meetings for worship and for business. Attenders are also welcome. In general, a person’s ability and willingness to take an appropriate share of responsibility for the life of the Meeting as a whole, and for the matters under discussion, give weight to his or her participation in the deliberations of the Monthly Meeting. Responsibility for decisions, however, remains with members of the Meeting.

**Admission to Membership**

**Attenders**

A person who is considering joining the Society of Friends should, through consistent attendance and study, come to have a sympathetic understanding of its faith, its way of worship, its manner of conducting business, and the responsibilities of membership. Important also is familiarity with the Yearly Meeting discipline, its *Faith and Practice*, and with the history, principles, and testimonies of the Religious Society of Friends.

The decision to admit a person into membership in the Society of Friends is made in a business session of the Monthly Meeting.

An applicant for membership writes a letter to the Monthly Meeting expressing a desire to become a member and is encouraged to include reasons for wanting to join the Religious Society of Friends. The letter is given to the Clerk of the Meeting who promptly acknowledges its receipt and forwards it to the Clerk of the Committee on Oversight.* The letter should be read to the Monthly Meeting either at the first meeting following its receipt or at the time the overseers report on the application.

* In many Meetings, the functions of the Committee on Worship and Ministry and those of the Committee on Oversight are delegated to a single committee, usually called the Committee on Ministry and Oversight.

The Committee on Oversight appoints a visiting committee of two or three Friends, at least one of whom is a member of the Committee on Oversight, to meet with the applicant. This visiting committee, after making sure that the applicant has a copy of *Faith and Practice* and has become familiar with it, arranges for a time and place for one or more visits with the applicant.

These visits serve to determine the readiness of the applicant and the Meeting for this membership by providing an opportunity (1) for the visiting Friends to become acquainted with the applicant on a deeper level, (2) for the applicant to ask questions, and (3) for the visiting Friends to provide any help needed to prepare the applicant and the Meeting for this new membership. The topics below, many of which will appear naturally in the course of conversation, may serve as guidelines for the committee. They are not meant as an examination nor is it expected that there are “right” or “wrong” answers. Their value lies in what they may reveal of the experience of both the counseling Friends and the applicant in seeking and discovering Truth. Sufficient time should be allowed to insure mutual understanding and trust. The visits should take place in the spirit of a common search.

1. **Motive for Applying**: The applicant is naturally interested in this subject and may wish to speak at length about it. Pursuing its implications may well take considerable time and this should be taken into consideration as plans are made for the visit(s). It is helpful to look both at the long-range and more immediate reasons for the application.

2. **Responsibilities of Membership**: Membership involves both spiritual and practical considerations. The applicant should understand the importance to the Meeting of regular and prompt attendance at meetings for worship and business and of being sensitive to contributing to the quality of silence and the spoken ministry. A discussion of the applicant’s potential contributions to the work and the finances of the Meeting is essential. The applicant should understand that, even though there is no appeal for funds at meeting for worship, a member is expected to support the Meeting financially when possible. The committee should make sure the applicant knows how this is done.

3. **Membership of Children**: An applicant with minor children needs to know that, if requested by the parent, junior membership is available to children until they apply on their own for membership or until they are twenty-one. (See page ____.) The committee should encourage questions from those children old enough to
wonder about the Society of Friends, should give them information, and assure them of the Meeting’s love and concern.

4. **Spiritual and Theological Matters:** The applicant should be aware of Friends’ emphasis on personal experience, rather than on formal creed. This concept may become clear after a discussion of what the prospective member’s own experience has revealed so far concerning the Inward Light, the Light of Christ, God, Jesus, the question of evil, the place of the Bible, and immortality. The applicant needs to be aware that Friends Meeting for Worship is more than a collection of people independently meditating and seeking their own “light within.” The Light—which spoken of as the Inner or Inward Light or as the Light of Christ—is a mystical concept signifying direct communion with God, available to each person—not possessed by them but rather shared by them. The Light may inwardly illuminate each person so as to be led in spiritual ways and to be seen by others as faithfully following that Guide. Since this concept is a mystical one, it may be perceived differently by different Friends, yet it is ultimately the same. The applicant should be able to be comfortable with the varied theological perceptions among Friends.

5. **Friends’ Practices:** The committee should make sure that the applicant is familiar with Friends’ literature, such as Howard Brinton’s *A Guide to Quaker Practice and Friends for 300 Years,* and the writings of George Fox and other Friends. These will help the applicant understand the spirit behind the practice of unprogrammed worship, the absence of a paid ministry, the conduct of marriage and memorial services, and the lack of outward sacraments. Special attention should be given to the decision-making process and the importance of the Spirit in meetings for business.

6. **Friends’ Testimonies:** The applicant should understand the aspects of Quaker faith on which the testimonies of peace, simplicity, equality, and community are based. “For Friends the most important consideration is not the right action in itself but a right inward state out of which right action will arise. Given the right inward state, right action is inevitable. Inward state and outward action are component parts of a single whole.” (Howard Brinton, 1943)

7. **Relationship to Other Friends:** Becoming a member of a Monthly Meeting means becoming a member of the whole Society of Friends. What does this mean in terms of a specific Monthly, Quarterly, and Yearly Meeting? What other Quaker Meetings exist in this area and elsewhere, and how does North Pacific Yearly Meeting relate to them? Such considerations might lead to a discussion of the American Friends Service Committee, the Friends Committee on National Legislation, Friends World Committee for Consultation, Friends General Conference, Friends United Meeting, Evangelical Friends Alliance, and of other associations, centers for study, schools, colleges, and Quaker publications.

8. **Relationship to Christianity and Other Religions:** The applicant should recognize the historic basis of Christianity in the Society of Friends as well as the significant place of Jesus and the Bible in the spiritual life of many Friends. Likewise it is important to understand that there are Friends who sometimes find traditional Christian language difficult and those who find spiritual meaning and inspiration from non-Christian sources. What is the applicant’s attitude toward other Christians and other religions?

9. **Membership and Personal Problems:** Opportunity should be given for the applicant to bring up past or present actions, involvements, or obligations which may make particular demands upon the Meeting. The visiting committee should encourage frank discussion of any burdens the applicant may be carrying, pointing out the Meeting resources and limitations in helping with these problems.

10. **Education:** The visit should include a discussion of the resources in the Meeting for religious care and nurture of children and for the lifelong spiritual growth of members of all ages, helping the applicant see the necessity for everyone to be involved in this process.

11. **Membership Procedure:** The committee should be certain that the applicant understands the procedure followed by the Meeting in acting on applications for membership.

The visiting committee reports to the Committee on Oversight. When the latter committee is satisfied with the applicant’s sincerity and readiness for becoming a Friend, it recommends to the Monthly Meeting that the applicant be accepted into membership. Final action on the recommendation is delayed until the following Monthly Meeting to allow Friends and the prospective member to become better acquainted with each other and to give Friends who have questions or reservations about the applicant an opportunity to explore these with the Committee on Oversight. It is customary for the applicant to withdraw from the Monthly Meeting during deliberations about this membership. A
Upon approval of the application, the Meeting minutes its acceptance of the new member, appoints a committee of two or more to provide a warm welcome into the Meeting fellowship and arranges for the completion and filing of the Membership Record. The welcoming visit also gives new members an opportunity to ask questions which may have occurred to them after they met with the visiting committee. The welcoming committee is often responsible for arranging for a Quaker book or periodical as the Meeting’s welcoming gift; it reports to the Meeting when its assignments have been completed.

If the visiting committee feels the applicant is not yet ready for membership, that committee encourages a wider exposure to Friends’ beliefs and practices. It may recommend additional reading, suggest that the applicant discuss Quakerism with more members of the Meeting and arrange additional visits with the applicant. The Committee on Oversight is kept informed and does not forward the application to the Monthly Meeting until this is recommended by the visiting committee. There may be times when, during this further exploration, it becomes clear to either the applicant or the visiting committee that membership is not advisable, in which case the application is withdrawn.

At the time when the Committee on Oversight takes an application to the Monthly Meeting, if there are Friends with reservations and the Meeting does not feel able to accept the recommendation of the Committee on Oversight, the application is returned to that committee. The Committee on Oversight contacts the applicant about the delay, consults with the Friends who have reservations and explores ways of resolving the situation. It may then decide to recommend that the Monthly Meeting accept the application or that the applicant withdraw the request for membership.

Applicants from Preparative Meetings and Worship Groups

The usual procedure for applications for membership should be followed if possible when the application is from an attender of a Preparative Meeting or organized Worship Group. This may be difficult to do and may need to be modified, especially when the satellite group is a considerable distance from the overseeing Monthly Meeting. In any case the application can provide an impetus for contact between the two groups and it is desirable to involve the satellite group in the process.

In the early stages of a satellite group, most of the responsibility for membership applications should lie with the overseeing Meeting. As the group grows and when it has several who are members of some Monthly Meeting, the degree of its responsibility should increase. At all stages, however, communication and consultation between the two groups are vital.

1. The attender of a satellite group sends a letter of application to the Clerk of the overseeing Monthly Meeting, after indicating this intention to the appropriate person in the group. The Clerk acknowledges the letter and gives it to the Committee on Oversight of the Monthly Meeting.

2. The Committee on Oversight appoints a visiting committee of two or more members of the Monthly Meeting, one or more of whom may be in the satellite group. It is important that this committee arrange sufficient time for a satisfactory visit with the applicant, even though it may not be possible immediately. The visiting committee should keep in mind the several possibilities for meeting with an applicant other than a visit arranged solely for that purpose: at the Annual Session of Yearly Meeting, at a Quarterly Meeting, during a semi-annual visit of the committee overseeing the satellite group or when the applicant may be in the area of the Monthly Meeting for some other purpose. The visiting committee should also remember the role that correspondence can take in the process. The committee should consult with the satellite group as well as with the applicant in determining the readiness of both for this membership, before reporting back to the Committee on Oversight.

3. Acceptance into membership occurs in the usual fashion (see page ___) in the overseeing Monthly Meeting, where the membership is recorded and to which the new member then bears some responsibility, including funds to cover the Yearly Meeting and Quarterly Meeting per capita assessments. Since only a few members of the overseeing Meeting may know the applicant, it is important for the Monthly Meeting to have faith in the wisdom of the visiting committee and the satellite group for their part in the process.

4. The Clerk of the Monthly Meeting should promptly notify the new member and the appropriate clerk or convenor of the satellite group regarding the action of the Meeting. Cooperation of the satellite group may be solicited in providing a suitable welcome to the new member.

As a Preparative Meeting grows and approaches Monthly Meeting status, the Committee on Oversight of the overseeing Meeting may ask the Committee on Oversight of the Preparative Meeting to deal with membership
application (appointing the visiting committee, etc.) and to report to it when the time has come to take the application to the Monthly Meeting for acceptance.

**Isolated Applicants**

Isolated individuals who are interested in membership but have no regular contact with a Friends group should, whenever possible, follow the usual procedure and send their letter of application to a Monthly Meeting. North Pacific Yearly Meeting is exploring the idea of individual membership in the Yearly Meeting, along with ways of providing nurture for such memberships, for individuals far removed from an organized Friends group.

The first of the above possibilities is preferable, since membership in a Monthly Meeting, the basic unit of the Society of Friends, would provide the member with continued exposure to a regularly functioning Friends body through the Meeting’s newsletter, minutes, and other contacts.

**Membership of Young People—Junior Membership**

* Junior membership should not be confused with Junior Friends who are young people of Junior and Senior High School age. Young Friends are those above high school age up to about 30 years old.

Monthly Meetings wish to nurture all the children in their fellowship, who from birth are considered their responsibility and under their care. Since it believes that children of members should be able to make their own choice about their religious life upon reaching adulthood, the Yearly Meeting does not have “birthright membership.” Children or young persons under the age of 16, however, may be registered as junior members upon a written request to the Monthly Meeting from their parents or guardians, if one or both are members of the Religious Society of Friends. The Meeting’s acceptance is recorded in the minutes.

As young people approach maturity, which may vary for individuals from early teens on, they are encouraged to consider becoming adult members. They should make this decision by the time they become 21. During this period the Committee on Oversight has a continuing responsibility to be in contact with all junior members and, when they seem ready, to invite them to write a letter requesting that their membership in the Monthly Meeting be continued. This request is then considered according to the regular procedure for membership. Before junior members leave home or, for any reason, are geographically removed from the Meeting, it is important that the Committee makes sure that they are clear about their relationship with the Meeting and explores the question of adult membership with them.

When junior members reach age 21 and have not indicated a desire to continue membership, they should be asked whether they wish to request adult membership, be listed as attenders or dropped from the Meeting list, since junior memberships terminate at the age of 21.

Young persons not eligible for junior membership—neither parent being a member, or one or both parents having joined after the young person is 16—may, if they wish, request full membership.

**Transfer of Membership**

All Meetings need a functioning membership and all members need an available Meeting. Therefore, a member who moves beyond the limits of the Monthly Meeting should, if possible, find a Meeting in the new vicinity and, after coming to know that Meeting, should have membership transferred. Membership in two Monthly Meetings at the same time is discouraged because membership should coincide with function and because dual membership requires double bookkeeping, distorts membership records, and suggests divided interest. Since membership in one Monthly Meeting includes membership in the whole Society, transfer of membership is usually a relatively easy matter.

When a Friend moves to the vicinity of another Monthly Meeting, the clerk of the Committee on Oversight of the original Meeting should write promptly to the Clerk of the new Meeting commending the member to their fellowship. Transfer of membership to the new Meeting without undue delay is encouraged; so as soon as the member feels at home, he or she sends a request for Certificate of Transfer to the Clerk of his or her Monthly Meeting. At the same time the member writes a letter informing the Clerk of the new Meeting that application for a transfer has been made.

The request for transfer, when received by the Clerk of the member’s Meeting, should be given promptly to the Committee on Oversight which, if everything is in order, recommends to the Monthly Meeting that the transfer be approved. Following Meeting approval, a Certificate of Transfer (see page ____) is prepared by the Clerk of the Meeting, and Information from Membership Record (see page ____), by the Recorder. These are sent to the Clerk of the new Monthly Meeting. The latter promptly acknowledges receipt of the material and refers it to the Committee on Oversight, which appoints a small committee to visit the Friend or family of Friends. At least one member of the
visiting committee is a member of the Committee on Oversight. Meetings can vary considerably and there may be differences in the interpretation of membership requirements. This, however, should not be construed as license for imposing additional requirements for membership or setting aside those contained in Faith and Practice. The visiting committee should make certain that the transferring Friend has become acquainted with the new Meeting and feels comfortable with any differences between the two Meetings. Thus, future misunderstanding may be avoided.

Should the visiting committee have grounds for serious question about accepting the transfer, consultation between the Committees on Oversight of both Meetings is in order, after which, if there remains serious objection, the new Meeting returns the Certificate to the issuing Meeting making clear the basis for this action.

When no obstruction appears to the visiting committee, the Committee on Oversight recommends that the Monthly Meeting accept the Certificate of Transfer. If the Meeting approves, it records the Friend as a member without additional waiting. The Clerk furnishes the member with a copy of the approving minute and sends an Acceptance of Transfer to the member’s former Meeting (see page ___) with which the membership has continued in the interim. The Monthly Meeting appoints one or more Friends to visit the new member and provide a warm welcome. If there are objections to the transfer and the Meeting is unable to go forward with approval, the procedure outlined in the last paragraph under Admission to Membership (see page ___) is followed.

When an applicant for membership presents a transfer or letter of recommendation from another religious body, a personal letter stating why the individual wishes to become a Friend should be included. Both of these are referred to the Committee on Oversight, which sends acknowledgment of the communications to the individual and to the religious body and then follows the usual procedure for Admission to Membership. When the applicant has been accepted by the Monthly Meeting, the Clerk also notifies the other denomination of this action.

When a Friend requests a transfer of membership to some other religious denomination, the procedure outlined under Termination of Membership is followed.

When Friends who have lived close to a Monthly Meeting move and find themselves at such a distance from the nearest Monthly Meeting that active participation is not possible, following the procedures outlined above may prove very difficult. Friends in this situation have either sought to maintain contact with the nearest Friends group or have corresponded with the American section of the Friends World Committee.

North Pacific Yearly Meeting
Certificate of Transfer

To ____________ Monthly Meeting of Friends

Dear Friends:

____________, [a member/members] of this Monthly Meeting, having moved with [his/her/their] minor [child/children], ____________, [has/have] requested a transfer of membership to your Meeting. Consideration has been given to this and there appears to be no obstruction to granting the request. We, therefore, recommend [him/her/them] to your loving care and remain, in love, your friends.

Signed on behalf of ____________ Monthly Meeting of Friends, held at ______________ on __________, 20__.  

____________

Clerk

North Pacific Yearly Meeting
Acceptance of Transfer

To ____________ Monthly Meeting of Friends

Dear Friends:

We have received your Certificate of Transfer dated ____________, 20__, and have accepted ____________ into membership with us.

Signed on behalf of ____________ Monthly Meeting of Friends, held at ______________ on __________, 20__.  

____________
North Pacific Yearly Meeting
Information From Membership Record

To____________________ Monthly Meeting of Friends
Name__________________________
Street__________________________
Town__________________________
State__________________________
Date of Birth_______________
Place of Birth_______________
How admitted______________

By application? By transfer (from what Meeting)?
Father’s Name__________________________
Mother’s Name__________________________
Married—to whom__________________________
When____________
Where____________

If husband or wife is a member of Meeting and where Husband’s or wife’s father____________
Maiden name of husband’s or wife’s mother__________________________

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From __________ Monthly Meeting of Friends
Date__________

Recorder

Sojourning Membership

It is generally best for a Friend and the Society if membership is in the Meeting nearest the place of residence. Members who expect to stay in the area of another “Meeting for a limited period of time, so that a transfer is not appropriate, are encouraged to write a letter to the Clerk of their home Meeting requesting a minute of sojourn. If the Meeting is clear that this request is in order, the minute is granted and the Clerk sends a copy of it to the Meeting specified and another copy to the Friend.

The Clerk of the Meeting receiving such a minute of sojourn acknowledges it promptly and presents it to the Monthly Meeting, which, unless some objection appears, accepts it and welcomes the Friend into the fellowship of the Meeting. This action is reported to the home Meeting. Sojourning members are considered fully participating
members and may serve the Meeting in whatever ways are fitting. The primary financial responsibility of sojourning Friends and the membership statistics remain with the home Meeting.

A sojourning membership closes when the Friend leaves the area of the Meeting, at which time the Clerk notifies the home Meeting.

**Termination of Membership**

Membership in the Society of Friends is terminated by action of the Monthly Meeting of which a person is a member, and membership of a Friend ceases when this action is recorded in the minutes. Either a Friend or a Monthly Meeting may initiate the steps leading to the termination of membership. Monthly Meetings need to keep in mind that some Friends may go through periods, sometimes prolonged, when their association with the life of the Meeting is tenuous; however, membership whose only basis is nostalgia or status should not be continued.

**Termination on the Initiative of a Member:**

When a member no longer feels in accord with the beliefs and practices of Friends, the individual should consult with the Committee on Oversight, or with others in the Meeting in whom there is trust and confidence, in order to explore the validity of the feeling before considering resignation.

If a member writes a letter of resignation, it is given to the Committee on Oversight before being brought to the Monthly Meeting. This committee appoints a committee of two or three persons, including one of its members, to visit the Friend in love and to inquire into the reasons for the resignation. If fitting, the Friend is encouraged to reconsider the request and to continue in the fellowship of the Meeting. If the member’s intention remains unchanged, this is reported to the Committee on Oversight, which in turn recommends to the Monthly Meeting that it grant the request for termination. The Meeting minutes the release of the Friend, stating that it is at the member’s request. The Clerk of the Meeting sends, by registered mail with return receipt requested, a letter to the resigning member. The letter includes a copy of the Meeting minute which states that the individual is no longer a member of the Society of Friends and expresses the affectionate regard of the Meeting. The Meeting should be open to renewed application from this person, handling it according to the usual procedure for new members.

When the circumstances regarding termination and the person are already well known to the Committee on Oversight and they are satisfied that the member’s decision is clear, the Committee may make its recommendation to the Monthly Meeting without the appointment of a committee.

If a member wishes to resign in order to join another religious body, the Monthly Meeting grants the request with a minute stating that the individual has been released from the Society of Friends. The Clerk notifies the individual in writing of the Meeting’s action and writes an appropriate letter to the religious body named by the applicant. When a member unites with another denomination without resigning, the Monthly Meeting, upon receiving such information and confirming it with the Friend, minutes the release of the individual from membership in the Society of Friends; the Clerk informs the individual of this action by registered mail with return receipt requested.

**Termination on the Initiative of a Monthly Meeting:**

A Monthly Meeting may initiate the release from membership if a Friend shows no interest in the Society of Friends over a prolonged period or exhibits repeated disregard of Friends’ principles.

If a Friend shows neither interest in the Society of Friends nor concern for the responsibilities of membership, he or she should be approached by a member of the Committee on Oversight or by a small committee, usually of its members, either by a visit or by correspondence. The purpose of this communication is to clarify the relationship between the member and the Society of Friends. The Meeting may attempt to restore the member’s interest in the Society of Friends. This process may require an extended period of time. If continued efforts for five or more years are of no avail, the Committee on Oversight notifies the member of its intention to recommend to the Monthly Meeting at a specified meeting for business that the individual’s membership be terminated. If the Meeting concurs when the recommendation is made, it makes a minute reciting the circumstances and recording the termination of the membership. The Clerk of the Meeting promptly sends a kindly written notice of this action to the discontinued member, by registered mail with return receipt requested.

If the address of a member has been unknown for five or more years and continued efforts of the Committee on Oversight to locate the member are fruitless, the Committee recommends that the Meeting drop the individual from its membership roll and the Meeting minutes such action.
If a Friend by conduct or publicly expressed views appears to be denying the beliefs and principles of the Society of Friends or to be misrepresenting Friends, so that the Meeting or its undertakings are being harmed by the person’s membership, the Committee on Oversight appoints a small committee of its members to meet with the Friend. In a spirit of loving concern this committee counsels with the member, seeking to understand the member’s views and actions and endeavoring to effect a change in the relationship with the Meeting, including the possibility of resignation from the Meeting.

If there appears to be no hope of restoring unity with the Meeting, the Committee on Oversight so reports to the Monthly Meeting and recommends that the membership be terminated. The Meeting may wish to appoint a special committee to confer further with the Friend before taking action. If there is still no hope of reconciliation, the Meeting notifies the member in writing of its intention to consider discontinuance of membership at a specified Meeting for Business. If the Meeting agrees that the membership should be terminated, a minute to that effect is made and the individual notified of the action by registered mail with return receipt requested.

In any consideration of termination of membership, if there are problems which do not seem resolvable at the Monthly Meeting level, the individual or the Meeting may approach the Quarterly Meeting Committee on Ministry and Oversight for help. In all cases the Meeting and individuals concerned should seek constantly to act in a spirit of continuing love.
The Monthly Meeting

I was moved to recommend the setting up of Monthly Meetings throughout the nation. And the Lord opened to me what I must do….

George Fox, 1667

THE MONTHLY MEETING is the fundamental unit of the Religious Society of Friends. It consists of a group of Friends who meet together at regular intervals to wait upon God in Meeting for Worship and Meeting for Business. When these are meetings in the true Quaker sense, Friends are “joined with God and with each other” and there is order, unity, and power. It is upon this concept of a meeting that the good order of Friends is based. Through the corporate life of a Monthly Meeting, Friends order their lives in relation to God and, through that relationship, to the most profound realities of life: birth and death, marriage and family, community of spirit, and concern for humanity and all of God’s creation.

Background

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

In the first years of the preaching of Fox and the Valiant Sixty, organization was informal and was only as much as was necessary for communication and coordination among the Children of Light and for those traveling in the cause of Truth. It depended chiefly upon the personal influence and incessant work of the early leaders. As the Society grew, there came to be a need for organized nurture of groups, for communication among groups, for dealing with internal problems, and for a united response to government persecution. Fox recognized that a method had to be found for Friends as a body to take responsibility for needed decisions, rather than for it to be assumed by a few outstanding leaders.

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

And the Lord opened to me what I must do, and how the men’s and women’s monthly and quarterly meetings should be ordered and established in this and in other nations….

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

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

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

George Fox, 1658

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

William Penn, 1678

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. And 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 more of the glory of God and his powers appears, to the refreshment of each individual.

Robert Barclay, 1671

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

John Woolman, 1740

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

John Woolman, 1747

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

Caroline E. Stephen, 1908

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

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

Douglas V. Steere, 1937

There is a need in us to be controlled, to receive, to worship, and adore. If our service is to be
real it is that we have received something in worship and pass it on; we do not imitate, we express
the Spirit in us. To live by the rule is one of the most disastrous things we can do. If you try
deliberately to be loving and kind because you think you should imitate, you put on something from
the outside; you waste your life; and worse-you do great damage. If you live in the Spirit you live
from the center within you. In worship we search for the Center in ourselves and in one another,
"from whence cometh our help."

Pacific Yearly Meeting, 1954

The Meeting for Worship is the heart of the Monthly Meeting and of the Society of Friends, for worship together
is central and fundamental to Friends. Its basis is direct communion with God. The Meeting for Worship is the only
Quaker practice which has existed from the beginning of the Society of Friends and which remains essentially the
same without having gone through a process of development. Meetings for Worship are held at established times,
usually once a week; appointed Meetings for Worship are arranged by the Monthly Meeting at the time of marriages,
memorial services, or other special occasions.

**Meeting for Business**

*Being orderly come together, not to spend time with needless, unnecessary and fruitless
discourses; but to proceed in the wisdom of God not in the way of the world, as a worldly assembly
of men, by hot contests, by seeking to 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
fellowship of God, in gravity, patience, meekness, in unity and concord, submitting one to another in
lowliness of heart, and in the holy Spirit of truth and righteousness….*

Edward Burrough, 1662

*It is a weighty thing to speak in large meetings for business. First, except our minds are rightly
prepared, and we clearly understand the case we speak to, instead of forwarding, we hinder the
business and make more labour for those on whom the burden of work is laid.

If selfish views or a partial spirit have any room in our minds, we are unfit for the Lord’s work.
If we have a clear prospect of the business and proper weight on our minds to speak, it behooves us
to avoid useless apologies and repetitions. Where people are gathered from far, and adjourning a
meeting of business attended with great difficulty, it behooves all to be cautious how they detain a
meeting, especially when they have sat six or seven hours and 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.

John Woolman, 1758

*The spirit of worship is essential to that type of business meeting in which the group endeavors
to act as a unit…. To discover what we really want as compared with what at first we think we want,
we must go below the surface of self-centered desires…. To will what God wills is … to will what we
ourselves really want.*
The Meeting for Business is a Meeting for Worship where Friends care for their corporate business. It is essential for the functioning of the Monthly Meeting. It takes place in the same expectant waiting for the guidance of the Spirit as does any Meeting for Worship. Friends’ manner of conducting business is an expression of their basic faith that the Light which is in all, when heeded, draws all into agreement in their common affairs, and is an expression of their commitment to follow that Light. A Meeting for Business is usually held once a month and it is often referred to as “monthly meeting.” Care must be taken to distinguish between the Monthly Meeting, the fundamental unit of the Society of Friends, and the monthly meeting, the occasion for conducting business.

Resolutions and Organization

The Monthly Meeting is the “family” of Friends. It receives and records new members; terminates membership when necessary; provides spiritual and, if need be, material aid to those in its fellowship; counsels with members in troubled circumstances; oversees marriages; gives care at the time of death; collects and dispenses funds for its maintenance and work; witnesses to Friends’ testimonies; relates itself to its Quarterly and Yearly Meeting, to other bodies of Friends and to other organizations with common concerns; and carries on any work or assumes any function consistent with the faith of Friends and not specifically referred to some other Friends’ body. Good records are kept of all its proceedings.

The degree of organization of a Monthly Meeting depends upon its circumstances. Organization does not exist for its own sake but to provide what is needed for the Meeting’s orderly and effective operation, while allowing each person a maximum of freedom, participation, and responsibility. Simple in its early stages, a Meeting’s organization evolves with its needs. Experience has shown that organizational structure which has proved useful should not be changed unless there is good reason to do so, but that which no longer serves a vital function should be laid down.

Friends’ Method of Reaching Decisions

Friends conduct business together in the faith that there is one divine Spirit which is accessible to all persons; when Friends wait upon, heed and follow the Light of Truth within them, its Spirit will lead to unity. This faith is the foundation for any group decision. Since it is of prime importance that Friends understand and follow this procedure for business in the Monthly Meeting, its basis and method are discussed in the present chapter, but the principle underlies all activities of the Society of Friends.

The basis for the Quaker method of reaching decisions is a religious one. Friends are expected to come to a Meeting for Business in expectation that the Holy Spirit will lead the assembled body to unity and correct action, and that unity is always possible because the same Light of Truth shines in some measure in every human heart. In practical terms this means that such meetings are held in a context of worship and that those present repeatedly and consciously seek Divine guidance. It is important that every Meeting for Business begin with a period of worship rather than “a few moments of silence,” so that the spirit of worship will pervade the transaction of business. To emphasize this interdependence, some Friends speak of Meeting for Worship for Business. Only as Friends are aware that they are functioning in the Divine presence does the Quaker method work. The commitment to search for unity depends upon mutual trust, implies a willingness to labor and to submit to the leadings of the Spirit, and grows as members become better acquainted with one another.

The Quaker method for reaching decisions involves searching for the right corporate decisions and arriving at a “sense of the meeting,” or reaching unity. A matter requiring Meeting action may be brought before the Meeting for Business by the Clerk, a committee or another member. In the latter two instances, the Clerk should be informed in advance so that the matter can be included on the agenda. It helps if a written copy of the proposal is given to the Clerk before or at the time of presentation to the Meeting. Care in preparing the agenda and the Clerk’s judgment of the relative urgency and importance of matters can help greatly to facilitate the Meeting’s business. Interested attenders as well as members are generally encouraged to attend and take part in business meetings. Responsibility for decisions, however, remains with members of the Meeting.

Friends are urged to seek Divine guidance at all times, be mutually forbearing, and be concerned for the good of the Meeting as a whole rather than to press a personal preference. Time should be allowed for deliberate and prayerful consideration of the matter in hand. Everyone must want to reach a decision and be open to new understanding. Friends should come to each Meeting for Business expecting that their minds will be changed. It is important that all members be heard if they feel concerned to express a point of view. They should speak briefly and to the point, express
their own view, avoid refuting statements made by others, and give each other credit for purity of motive. When someone has already stated a position satisfactorily Friends need offer only a word or two expressing agreement.

Before speaking, Friends should seek recognition from the Clerk; they should not speak to individuals, and should be hesitant about speaking more than once unless they have new light on an issue. Each vocal contribution should be something which adds to the ideas already presented. The Clerk, as gatherer of the sense of the Meeting, should be reluctant to state an opinion. If that view is being overlooked, the Clerk may be able to draw attention to it through questions. If the Clerk has strong views on the matter, the Assistant Clerk or another Friend is asked to serve as Clerk during its consideration. Throughout, the grace of humor can often help to relax the tensions of a Meeting so that new Light comes to it.

At times, those present become aware of a gathered insight, or an inner sense of rightness, and it is recognized that a decision has been reached. The Clerk then easily senses that the Meeting has reached unity and expresses the sense of the Meeting in a minute.

At other times, it is more difficult to reach a decision and the Clerk must carefully weigh the various points of view which have been expressed before offering a tentative formulation of a minute. If there are one or two members who do not agree, but feel that it is nevertheless the right decision for the Meeting at the time, they will remain silent or withdraw their objection and free the Meeting to proceed.

**Serious Differences of Opinion**

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

Occasionally one or two Friends object, and feel they cannot withdraw their objection to the Meeting’s taking action in a matter on which all other Friends in the Meeting unite. In such a situation, the opposing Friends may well question whether their objections should be considered binding on the Meeting. On the other hand, a Meeting may too readily agree to an action on plausible but superficial grounds, so it is well to ponder objections voiced by a few Friends, or even a single Friend, which may reach to the heart of the matter at hand. If the Meeting, after prolonged laboring, is convinced that it is following Divine guidance, it may set aside the objections and proceed. It may include reference to the objections in the minute recording the action. The growth of Truth among the members in the course of time will confirm the action or lead the Meeting to a sounder decision. A chronic objector whose opinions carry little weight may be dealt with considerately without the Meeting’s necessarily being disrupted. An objector, however, who insists, time after time, in putting a personal judgment against the clear unity of the Meeting in a disruptive manner, even after being eldered, may need the counsel of Friends as to whether that individual understands and can function in Friends’ way of doing business.

In the process of reaching a decision, the Clerk and the Meeting may quite properly take into consideration that some Friends have more wisdom and experience than others. It should also bear in mind that some members have specialized knowledge and training in certain areas and therefore their conviction may carry greater weight when the matter at hand is related to their expertise. In either case, the opposition of such Friends cannot as a rule be disregarded. The Meeting, however, must be on guard against always accepting words of weighty Friends as final and must also be wary of accepting the traditional pattern only because it is traditional. Fresh, powerful insights are often granted to new and younger members. When a committee brings a recommendation for consideration, the Meeting must keep in mind that the recommendation is the result of concentrated attention of a small group and must resist temptation to repeat the work of the committee; the committee must avoid being so attached to its recommendation that it forgets that new insights can develop as the Meeting considers the matter.

**Formulation of Minutes**

Once the Clerk has formulated a minute, any member may offer additions, corrections, or a substitute minute. When members approve and no objection is voiced, the minute is written down and read back to the Meeting by the Clerk or Assistant Clerk. The Clerk should be given authority to make minor editorial changes in the minute later, if any appear needed. At the next meeting, when the minutes of the previous meeting are read, attention may be called to
the changes. When approved in its original or edited form, the minute becomes part of the Meeting’s permanent record.

Any session of a Meeting for Business may be adjourned to a later date and the business continued at an “adjourned Meeting for Business.” A special meeting may be called by the Clerk to consider a specific matter of business. Advance notice of such a “called Meeting for Business” should be given, and no business should be considered other than that for which the meeting was called.

**Threshing Sessions**

Friends should not avoid issues which may be difficult or controversial. It is better for the Meeting to allow full opportunity for differences to be aired and faced. In dealing with such issues, or those of a complex nature entailing information with which some Friends may be unfamiliar, it is often helpful to hold one or more preliminary “threshing meetings” in which no decision is made, but through which the chaff can be separated from the grain of truth. Such meetings can clear the way for later action on the issue. Full notice of a threshing session should be given and special efforts made to see that Friends of all shades of opinion can and will be present. To the extent that Friends of a given view are absent, the usefulness of such a meeting will be impaired. If factual material needs to be presented, persons knowledgeable in the area should be asked to present such material and be available to answer questions.

The Clerk or moderator of a threshing session should make it clear at the start that the Meeting not only expects, but welcomes expressions of the widest differences. Friends are urged not to hold back whatever troubles them about the issues at hand. Hesitancy to share a strong conviction, because it may offend someone, reflects a lack of trust. The Clerk’s job, then, is to draw out the reticent, limit the time taken by too-ready talkers, and see that all have an opportunity to speak. It is useful to ask someone to take notes of the meeting for later reference. At times the threshing meeting may forward a recommendation to the Meeting for Business.

**Unity**

Friends strive to achieve unity—not uniformity, not unanimity, and not like-mindedness. Friends achieve unity because of their conviction that there is such a thing as corporate guidance where a group, meeting in the expectation of Divine leading, may be given a greater insight than any single person. The unity which Friends seek and “hope to capture in a recorded minute is God’s will in relation to the matter under consideration. Assent to a minute, however, does not imply uniformity of judgment. Rather it is a recognition that the minute records what the group feels is right at a given time. There may be Friends who would wish the Meeting to move forward more adventurously and others who fear what seems dangerous experiment. Each might have wished the Meeting to take a different course from that agreed upon, but will give assent to the sense of the Meeting. Unity is always possible to those who go deep enough, for Truth is one and the nearer we come to the one Light of Truth, the nearer we come to unity. The search for Truth and unity is sometimes a long and difficult one, requiring much love, tolerance, and patience, but it is worth the effort. The method has not always succeeded; this has generally been because some members have not achieved the right attitude of mind and heart or because Friends have been too impatient for unity to develop. Nevertheless, Quakers have used this method with a large degree of success for more than three centuries. Rufus Jones said, “Friends have merely kept alive a sound method.”

**Concerns and Liberating Concerned Friends**

Although Friends endeavor to serve God through their daily lives, there sometimes comes to an individual a leading to some specific task, felt as an imperative claim of God which-cannot be denied even when this is accompanied by personal reluctance. This is what Friends call a concern. It is also possible for a concern to arise spontaneously in a Meeting in response to a particular need or opportunity. From early days the Society of Friends has greatly valued those leadings of the Spirit which result in individual and corporate concerns. It has learned, however, that concerns vary in merit, depending on the validity of their inspiration and the care with which they are considered and carried out. The concerns of even well known Friends have not always been of equal significance. Concerns vary, too, in their pertinence for others, some being meant only for an individual, others having a wider meaning. Friends are urged to be clear about the corporate consideration and support of a concern before proceeding with it publicly. A concerned person should have patience and humility in seeking support for a concern.

The appropriate place for a concern first to be considered and tested as a true leading of the Spirit is within the Monthly Meeting, the basic unit of the Society. Before a Friend brings a concern to the Meeting for Business, the Friend should consider it prayerfully, to be sure that it is rightly motivated and of more than personal or passing importance. The Friend should season the concern through consultation with qualified Friends, a standing committee of the Meeting, or a specially requested Committee on Clearness. The concern should come to the Meeting for
Business in mature form with a clear, concise, written statement of its purpose, means, and the support requested from the Meeting. Public expression implying Meeting support for a concern is to be avoided unless and until such support has been received, especially when possible disobedience to law or conflict with custom may be involved.

Unhurried consideration by the Meeting is important and this may extend over more than one monthly meeting. During this process the Meeting may be enlightened by the insights of prophetic individuals, and all may be helped to clarify their own insights.

The Meeting may unite with and support a Friend to carry out a concern personally. Such a concern might be to travel in the ministry, to witness to Friends’ principles in a given situation, or to do other religiously motivated service. The process of liberating a Friend to act on a concern should involve careful consideration both of the merits and methods of the concern and the qualifications and situation of the Friend to be liberated. Motivation, character, and family and financial situation need to be considered. When favorable action is taken, including material help as needed, the Friend is provided with a minute outlining the nature of the concern and giving the Meeting’s endorsement. If the Friend desires, the Meeting may appoint a small committee for advice and support. Sometimes a Meeting may find itself brought so fully into sympathy that the concern is laid upon the whole group and is carried out by the Meeting.

If a concern has wider meaning than for the Monthly Meeting, it may be shared directly with other Monthly Meetings. It may also be forwarded to the Quarterly Meeting or to the Steering Committee of North Pacific Yearly Meeting, which may result in its being shared with other Meetings or with the Annual Session of the Yearly Meeting. (See “Bringing Concerns Before the Yearly Meeting,” p. ___.)

If a concern does not arise from a genuine spiritual leading and the Friend is “running ahead of his Guide,” the Meeting continues to be unable to unite with the concern.

Letters of Introduction

Fellowship and the spiritual life of the Society of Friends have long been nourished by visitation outside a member’s own Meeting. When a member has occasion to travel and wishes to be in touch with other members of the Society of Friends, the Monthly Meeting Clerk may write a Letter of Introduction. The letter will certify the person’s membership, state something about the person’s participation in the life of the Meeting, and convey greetings to Friends who will be visited. The letter is usually presented by the traveler to Meetings or other Friends visited, who may choose to write a return greeting on the letter which is presented to the issuing Meeting upon return. When appropriate, the Meeting may also grant a letter of introduction to a faithful attender.

Traveling Minutes

When a member proposes to travel under the weight of a concern to be shared with other Friends, the matter is first considered by the Committee on Oversight. Upon recommendation by that committee, the Monthly Meeting may grant a Traveling Minute releasing the Friend for a particular concern. If the visit is to be beyond the Yearly Meeting, the minute should be forwarded to the Clerk of the Steering Committee for Yearly Meeting endorsement. Before such an endorsement is made, it should be clear that the traveling Friend is aware of and sensitive to the differences in theology and practice among the Friends to be visited. When a Meeting grants a minute of travel, it should take care that, as far as possible, the service is not hindered for lack of funds or other resources.

Traveling minutes are submitted to and are customarily endorsed by the Clerk or other officer of Meetings visited by traveling Friends. Persons granted minutes should return them to the issuing Meeting within a reasonable time after the visitation has been completed. Friends should also report to other Meetings which have supported the concern.

Friends who are traveling and wish to visit Friends in other Meetings may receive valuable guidance through Friends World Committee for Consultation, Section of Americas, 1506 Race Street, Philadelphia, PA 19102.
Officers and Committees

Each Monthly Meeting appoints whatever officers and committees are necessary for the corporate life of the Meeting. While growing in strength and experience, a small Meeting may be able to function with only a Clerk and with the Meeting acting as a committee of the whole. As soon as possible the Meeting appoints a Committee on Ministry and Oversight whose clerk is someone other than the Clerk of the Meeting. Provision for the religious education of children who come under its care should also be an early concern of the Meeting.

The Meeting selects its officers and committees from appropriate nominations which are presented by the Nominating Committee. The Meeting is concerned not only with appointing the most qualified person to each job but also with developing and using the talents and resources of all members and attenders. In asking people to assume various responsibilities, the Meeting recognizes that different individuals have different gifts which are not equally appropriate for all positions in the Meeting. Members and attenders should not be asked to take on inappropriate responsibilities out of a sense of “equality” or “taking turns.” An effective officer or committee should feel free to call upon persons in the Meeting whenever necessary to help in carrying out a particular responsibility. The Meeting must also be able to trust its officers and committees and spare the entire body from many small decisions. Ministry in word and act, responsibility for the good order and material needs of the Meeting, visitation, faithfulness in testimonies—all these things, in the measure of Light that is given, fall upon each person in the Meeting.

Officers

The Meeting appoints suitable members as its officers for a definite term of service.

The Clerk presides at the business sessions of the Meeting, is responsible for the minutes of its proceedings, and carries out the instructions of the Meeting on all matters pertaining to the accomplishment of its business.

The Clerk’s basic function is to facilitate the business of the Meeting. The Clerk performs the role well by seeing to it that all pertinent business and concerns are presented to the Monthly Meeting clearly and in good order. The following suggestions are meant especially for the Clerk of a Monthly Meeting, but they apply generally to the Clerk of any sort of a Friends Meeting and may be useful guidelines for clerks of Friends committees.

The Clerk should be a member of the Meeting who has the confidence of its membership and who, in turn, has a real respect and warm regard for its individual members and attenders. The Clerk should be spiritually sensitive so that the Meeting for Business may be helped to discover the leadership of the Spirit. A knowledge of Faith and Practice is essential and of other Quaker literature helpful. The Clerk should be able to comprehend readily, evaluate rightly, and state clearly and concisely an item of business or a concern which comes to the Meeting. In order to gather the sense of the Meeting at the proper time, the Clerk needs to be able to listen receptively to what is said.

The Clerk should faithfully attend Meeting for Worship, keep close to the work of committees, and attend meetings of the Worship and Ministry and Oversight Committees in order to be aware of the condition of the Meeting.

The Clerk presides at all Meetings for Business; if unavoidably prevented from attending, arrangements should be made for a substitute, usually the Assistant Clerk. The Clerk prepares an agenda prior to the Meeting and encourages committee clerks and others to provide ahead of time such reports, concerns and other proposals as ought to be placed on the agenda. The Clerk’s judgment of the relative urgency and importance of matters and their best place on the agenda can help greatly to facilitate the Meeting’s business, which can also be helped by the Clerk’s providing for sufficient background material when a matter is presented. The Clerk sees that correspondence which comes to the Meeting is properly handled.

The role of the Clerk, in general, is not to express his or her own views, but to see that others present participate as fully as possible in the business and that a few do not dominate it. A Clerk who feels led to express a strong opinion on a controversial matter should ask the Assistant Clerk or another Friend to act as Clerk and take the sense of the Meeting. A chief art of the Clerk is to set the pace of the meeting so that its business may be accomplished without either undue delay or undue hurry. A sense of proportion and a sense of humor are helpful. After action has been taken, the Clerk notifies, preferably in writing, the persons involved and makes sure that they understand their responsibility in carrying out their actions.

The Clerk signs all official papers and minutes. If there are both a Clerk and an Assistant or Recording Clerk, it is good practice for both to sign, particularly if legal documents or minutes are involved. The Clerk, or Assistant Clerk, prepares and endorses certificates of transfer, minutes for sojourning members, traveling minutes, and letters of introduction, as well as endorsing minutes or letters of visiting Friends.
The Clerk also has the responsibility to coordinate the activities of the Meeting with those of the Quarterly and Yearly Meetings of which it is a part. This includes seeing that the Meeting is represented where necessary, that reports are written and sent to the proper officers, that business and concerns are sent at the proper time to the Quarterly or Yearly Meeting, and that items received from those Meetings go to the proper persons and committees.

An assistant to the Clerk, who may be called an Assistant Clerk, Alternate Clerk, or Recording Clerk, helps the Clerk during Meetings for Business, in preparing minutes and in whatever ways are mutually agreeable. The assistant acts for the Clerk when the latter is unable to serve. In some Meetings this clerk also serves as Recorder (see below).

A Corresponding Clerk who cares for the reception, acknowledgement, and transmission of communications may be appointed if needed.

The Treasurer receives and disburse funds as the Meeting directs, keeps the account books of the Meeting, and reports regularly. The accounts should be audited at regular intervals.

An Assistant Treasurer to work with and help the Treasurer may be appointed in larger Meetings or when there is need.

The Recorder faithfully keeps an accurate record of the membership as provided for on the form recommended by the Yearly Meeting (see p. ___). Copies of this form are available from the Clerk of the Steering Committee. Such records cover vital statistics pertaining to the member and the member’s immediate family. It is important that changes relating to membership, such as births, deaths, transfers, releases, or marriages be promptly recorded.

Each spring the Recorder is responsible for filling out a questionnaire from the Yearly Meeting giving statistical and other information regarding the Monthly Meeting. A copy of this report is part of the permanent records of the Monthly Meeting.

The Recorder should also make sure that other important records of the Meeting are being properly taken care of. Minute and record books in current use are kept by the officer responsible for them. All others are preserved together with important correspondence and legal papers, such as deeds, conveyances, and trusts, in a permanent repository protected from fire and loss. All minutes and records should be on paper of high quality. Typewritten records are preferable to those in handwriting.

Committees

Committees are tools the Monthly Meeting may use to facilitate its business. Meetings have found that much of their work can be done more appropriately in small groups than in the body of the Meeting or by individuals.

Each Meeting decides which committees are necessary to carry out its business and concerns. There is no obligation to create any committee, although most Monthly Meetings find a Committee on Ministry and Oversight and a Nominating Committee essential. Other standing committees often found in Meetings are those on Religious Education, Finance and Budget, Peace and Social Order, Property, and Social. Ad hoc committees are sometimes useful for a particular project or concern. When a committee no longer serves its purpose, it should be laid down.

Members of committees need to be carefully selected according to their abilities and concerns. Appointments to a committee are for a definite term of service and often are arranged so that terms overlap, to insure continuity. Meetings customarily appoint experienced and capable members of the Society of Friends to the Committee on Worship and Ministry, the Committee on Oversight, the Nominating Committee, and as clerks of most committees. The purpose is to assign those responsibilities to persons of spiritual depth who are familiar with Friends’ faith and ways of organizing and conducting Meeting work. When Meetings identify such persons, even though they may not be members, they may choose to invest them with those responsibilities.

Committees conduct business in the same manner as does a Monthly Meeting, waiting on the Spirit to find direction in their operation and unity in their decisions. It is important that members of committees, and clerks especially, attend Meeting for Business regularly in order to assure smooth coordination between the committees and the Meeting.

It is important that committees keep minutes of their meetings and report to the Monthly Meeting regularly. All action of committees in the name of the Meeting is subject to approval by the Monthly Meeting. In bringing a matter to the Meeting for Business, it is useful for the committee to supply a concise summary of background material and a clear statement of the kind of response wanted from the Meeting. In the Meeting for Business, Friends need to consider carefully the recommendations of a committee, and at the same time not re-do the work of the committee. Mutual trust between the Meeting and a committee and faith in the power of God over all will help achieve the proper balance.
Attention to the above guidelines will aid in making committees useful tools rather than extraneous burdens in carrying out the business of the Meeting.

The Committee on Worship and Ministry: The Committee on Oversight

The closely related functions of these two committees are central to the life of the Meeting. The primary focus of the Committee on Worship and Ministry is the spiritual life of the Meeting, while the Committee on Oversight is mainly concerned with the members, including their relationship to the Meeting. Meetings should understand the different functions of these two committees and see that these functions are faithfully carried out. These committees have a special responsibility to oversee, encourage, and develop the care of members for each other and for the life of the Meeting, but all members share in the responsibility for such care. In smaller Meetings the functions of both committees are delegated to one committee, usually known as the Committee on Ministry and Oversight.*

* Some Meetings call the single committee the “Committee on Ministry and Counsel” with the term “Counsel” covering the functions of the term “Oversight” as described in this Discipline. In historical Quaker usage, a Committee(or Meeting) on Ministry and Counsel, successor to the Meeting of Ministers and Elders, has usually been one concerned primarily with worship and vocal ministry and not also with care of the membership.

The function of the Committee on Worship and Ministry is to foster and strengthen the spiritual life of the Meeting by nurturing the Meeting for Worship and the spiritual growth of individuals in the Meeting. Though this is a challenging assignment and one which is difficult to express in specifics, its importance to the life of the Meeting cannot be overemphasized. The first responsibility of members of this committee is to deepen their own spiritual lives and their preparation for worship.

This committee includes members of varied ages and gifts who are faithful in worship and sensitive to the life of the Spirit. It includes both Friends inclined to speak in Meeting for Worship and those less inclined to do so. It also includes Friends of good judgment who have a gift for counseling with others concerning sensitiveness to Divine prompting.

The committee meets regularly to consider the Meeting for Worship and to keep it under constant review, prayer, and care. Their own example is an important means through which they can strengthen the Meeting for Worship. Their concern during the week, the promptness and reverence with which they approach the Meeting for Worship, and their faithfulness in responding to and staying within the guidance of the Spirit are the most effective ways through which they may deepen the quality of worship. Through self-examination, prayer, and mutual counsel they also may help one another and the Meeting to grow in worship and ministry. An ever-renewed dedication to worship is almost always the best cure for what may go wrong in a Meeting for Worship.

[Committee members] thus abiding in a simple and patient submission to the will of God, and keeping down to the openings of divine life in themselves, may witness a growth in their gifts, and will also be preserved from extending their declarations further than they find the power of truth to accompany them.

Discipline of Yearly Meeting of Friends
held in Baltimore, 1806

This committee is responsible for details in connection with Meeting for Worship, such as providing for the welcome of visitors, for encouraging promptness at Meeting and for closing Meeting for Worship.

The committee should at times hold meetings for all members and attenders to share their experience and search for insight concerning the Meeting for Worship and the Meeting for Business. Committee members should be mindful that there are differences in background, fluency of expression, and power of interpretation among those who may be led to speak. They have responsibility to give sympathetic encouragement to those who show promising gifts and to give loving and tender guidance to those who speak unacceptably or at undue length or with too great frequency. They should endeavor to open the way for those who are timid and inexperienced in vocal ministry and should encourage all Friends in the ministry of listening. In trying to be helpful, they should be governed by a sense of the common seeking of human beings for right guidance, rather than by an assumption of superior wisdom.

The committee should seek to deepen the spiritual lives of the individuals in the Meeting and to encourage their varied gifts for ministry and service, whether through vocal ministry, teaching, and counsel, or through aesthetic, social, and practical ways of expression. An important duty of Friends appointed to this committee is to help make diversity creative. This committee should encourage private worship, prayer, meditation, and devotional reading which may promote growth in the spiritual life and prepare each individual for the corporate worship of the Meeting. It may wish to obtain and circulate appropriate literature and arrange for retreats, study groups, and spiritual sharing groups.
The Committee on Oversight is responsible for the care of the membership and of the corporate life of the Meeting. In providing this pastoral care, the committee is concerned with the more outward aspects of building a fellowship in which all members find acceptance, loving care, and opportunity for service. Then all may grow in grace and, liberated from preoccupation with self, be helped to serve humanity creatively.

Membership on this committee calls for dedication, tact, and discretion, and should be entered into prayerfully, with an alert willingness to be of service. The Meeting selects members to serve on this committee who are representative of the varied make-up of the Meeting and who are persons of experience, sympathy, and good judgment. Where possible, some members of the committee should have counseling skills. The committee should meet regularly and carry on their work in a spirit of dedication and love.

The committee should become acquainted with Meeting members, visit them in their homes, if possible, and maintain contact with all members and attenders in a spirit of affectionate interest and loving care. To foster the knowledge of one another in things both temporal and eternal, they encourage members and attenders to visit in each other’s homes and stimulate the Meeting to undertake activities which will deepen the Meeting fellowship. They also encourage Friends to attend the Annual Session of the Yearly Meeting and similar gatherings, advising on possible financial assistance for this purpose. They keep in touch with inactive members, hoping to rekindle their interest in the Meeting. When nonparticipation continues for a prolonged period, the Friend should be encouraged to withdraw from membership (see p. __). At least once a year letters should be written to nonresident members to give them news of the Meeting and its activities and to let them know that the Meeting is interested in their welfare. When appropriate, transfer of membership to a nearby Meeting should be encouraged. The committee notifies other Monthly Meetings promptly when Friends and faithful attenders move into their area, whether or not transfer of membership is involved. This committee, often in cooperation with the Meeting Recorder, is responsible for preparing annually a list of Meeting members and attenders.

The committee considers and recommends action upon requests for membership and transfer and withdrawal of membership (see pp. __ __ __). It is concerned for the nurture of the religious life of children and young people, for their participation in the Meeting and their preparation for membership. The committee helps to make newcomers and attenders welcome and to provide to inquirers information concerning the Society of Friends. When it seems right, it encourages application for membership from those who may be holding back through shyness or a sense of unworthiness. Persons are sometimes drawn to the Meeting because of its acceptance of those with problems. A Meeting needs to be careful not to offer solutions entailing aid beyond its powers. Any question of membership should be considered on its own grounds, not as a solution to personal difficulties.

The committee assists those contemplating and entering into marriage under the care of the Meeting (see Chapter 9). It gives care and aid in needed arrangements at the time of death (see Chapter 10). The committee seeks to be of help in clarifying matters involving organization, practice and procedure in the Society of Friends and in clearing up misunderstandings and reconciling differences which may come about in the Meeting. Committee members are concerned with the welfare of any who are ill, incapacitated, troubled, or in material need. The committee sees that they are visited, counseled with, and assisted as may be required. The Meeting needs to provide this committee with a fund to be used at its discretion.

Particular responsibility for care and counseling lies with the Committee on Oversight, which should choose counselors fitted for particular needs from among themselves or other qualified persons in the Meeting. Qualifications of a good counselor include approachability, warmth, sympathy, spiritual insight without prejudice, capacity to listen without judging, and ability to keep confidences. The Meeting for Worship can be a basic resource in counseling; through corporate worship the strength and power of God’s love may open a way that reaches to the hidden depths of personal problems, as we all strive to grow in spiritual and emotional maturity. The Meeting for Worship, however, should remain worship-centered; it should not become an occasion for dialogue on personal problems.

In dealing with particular needs, the committee should keep in mind that listening is a key part of the helping process. It should be sensitive to those who may not recognize their need for counseling, or who hesitate to seek help. One or two persons should be assigned in a given situation. While confidential matters are left to them, they may call upon the Committee on Oversight as needed. To listen helpfully and creatively involves faith in the person and in God, a desire to understand, patience, and avoidance of giving advice. The counselor may suggest new ways of looking at the problem and possible solutions, but decisions must be left to the person involved. Growth, independence, and standing on one’s own feet are to be encouraged. Emotional support in a hard decision can be most helpful.

A problem may be too serious for the Committee on Oversight to handle alone, in which case professional referral should be sought. Members of the committee need to have a knowledge of resources for counseling assistance in the
wider community, such as clinics, family and social services, physicians, and psychiatrists. The committee may call upon the Meeting to be of assistance when professional help is required. Practical assistance such as Friends offer in other times of stress, illness, or sorrow may be appropriate. Standing by, listening, and helping to plan can also be of great help in a critical time.

When an individual, family, or other group is facing a particularly difficult situation, a Committee on Clearness (or a Committee of Concern) may be requested or suggested by members of the Meeting. The Committee on Oversight assumes responsibility for setting up the committee in consultation with the individual or group concerned. Situations in which clearness is sought may include adjustments in marriage, separation, divorce, stands to be taken on public issues, a new job, a required move to a distant area, a concern for personal witness, traveling in the ministry, and other personal decisions. The committee and the individual or group meet together in worship to seek God’s guidance. Valuable insights often result from the worship-sharing in one or more sessions. *


Joint Responsibilities: In a Meeting which has both a Committee on Worship and Ministry and a Committee on Oversight, these committees share certain responsibilities. These committees are sometimes asked by a Monthly Meeting to share in the nurture of Worship Groups and Preparative Meetings under its care, although a separate committee especially appointed for this is a more satisfactory arrangement.

Although these committees usually meet separately, it is important that they keep in touch with each other. A joint retreat, for a day or a weekend, can be of benefit for the life of the committees and that of the Meeting. They should meet together at least twice a year, at the beginning of the year to review responsibilities, and in the spring to help in the preparation of the State of Society Report.

The State of Society Report is prepared once a year by each Monthly Meeting in time to be forwarded to the spring session of its Quarterly Meeting. In contrast to the informal reports of activities given to Quarterly Meetings at other times of the year, the State of Society Report should be a self-examination by the Meeting and its members of their spiritual strengths and weaknesses and of efforts to foster growth in the spiritual life. Reports may cover the full range of interest and concerns but should emphasize those indicative of the spiritual health of the Meeting.

To facilitate the preparation of this report, the Committee on Worship and Ministry and that on Oversight may meet together and explore the spiritual condition of the Meeting. They may then formulate a series of queries for a response from the Meeting as the basis of the report or may ask one or more of its members to draft a preliminary report for searching consideration by the Meeting. After revision and acceptance by the Meeting, the report is read at the Quarterly Meeting and given to the Quarterly Meeting Committee on Ministry and Oversight.

The Nominating Committee

The Nominating Committee is one of the most important committees. The Meeting depends upon this small group of sensitive, wise, tactful and dedicated Friends to find the most appropriate persons to fulfill Meeting responsibilities and to use to best advantage the capabilities of Meeting members and attenders.

The Nominating Committee should be representative of the Meeting and its members should serve overlapping terms. In some Meetings the committee itself is nominated by a small ad hoc committee selected for this purpose by the Monthly Meeting, to which its nominations are reported for approval. This selection process is used to insure that the Nominating Committee does not perpetuate itself.

Members of the Nominating Committee should be familiar with the function and structure of the Meeting and with the “good order of Friends.” They should be aware of the interests, talents, proven experience, latent gifts, and potential leadership of Meeting participants. The committee must begin its work well in advance of the date when its nominations for new officers, committees, and committee clerks are presented to the Monthly Meeting. The Meeting postpones action upon the proposed slate for a month, during which time any member may seek clarification or suggest changes in the nominations to the Nominating Committee. This committee continues to serve as a standing committee throughout the year to nominate persons to fill vacancies which may occur or new positions which the Meeting may establish.

The best interests of the Meeting and its participants will be served if the Nominating Committee keeps in mind the following suggestions:

1. In approaching persons it should see that details of the nominating process are understood, including the fact that the Meeting, not the committee, is responsible for the ultimate appointment.
2. The approach should not be made casually and the duties involved in any position should be fully understood by the Nominating Committee and by the person approached for nomination. A written job description should be given to a prospective nominee.

3. Not all Friends are equally qualified for a particular responsibility, so “taking turns” and rewarding long service are to be avoided in making nominations.

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

5. Clerks of committees, rather than convenors, should be named.

Other Committees
Additional standing or ad hoc committees can be selected by Meetings as needed.
Marriage and Committed Relationships

Marriages and committed relationships pass through many phases, and through all phases the quality of the relationship is tested. The development of a relationship is a growing experience. Respect for each other and enduring, loving expression deepen the bond. With God’s help, each couple finds a true path and a way of living that leads to a strong union. Yet, whatever the style of life, all relationships need a foundation of commitment, communication, honesty, and integrity. Patience, humor and a spirit of adventure, guided by a mutual trust in God’s presence, strengthen the present and brighten the hope for the future.

Adapted from Pacific Yearly Meeting, Faith and Practice, 1985

For over 300 years the Religious Society of Friends has struggled to understand and testify to our belief in basic human rights. We affirm again that there is that of God in every person. We are reminded that “God is love, and those who abide in love abide in God and God abides in them” (1 John 4:16). We find that the Spirit of God is present in all loving relationships, regardless of the genders of those involved. …

Therefore, North Pacific Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends endorses efforts to protect the civil rights of all persons regardless of their sexual orientation. Our love and support is for all persons and is not based upon the gender of the person they love.

Minute approved by North Pacific Yearly Meeting, Annual Session 1992

Our spiritual journey can be enriched and strengthened in a loving, committed relationship. Friends have long recognized that some couples are called into a covenant relationship, a ministry of caring, which with Divine assistance may open the door to deep and unreserved love, to forgiveness, to sharing strengths, to trust and to the nurture of each other’s growth.

Early Friends recognized that the joining of two people in such a covenant relationship “is the work of the Lord only, and not the priests or magistrates; for it is God’s ordinance and not man’s; and therefore Friends cannot consent that they should join them together: for we marry none; it is the Lord’s work, and we are but witnesses.” (George Fox, 1669)

When two people feel called into such a covenant relationship and aspire to a lifetime commitment to each other, they seek clearness with their Meeting. When the Meeting finds clearness—in the couple, and within the Meeting—to take their relationship under its care, the couple publicly affirms and celebrates their commitment to one another in a Meeting for Worship. The couple chooses what to call their relationship.

Coming Under the Care of the Meeting

Couples need an established relationship with the Meeting to come under its care. When a new commitment is formed, a Meeting, through a Clearness Committee, counsels with the partners, seeking to establish their clearness in what they are undertaking. If the committee so recommends, and the Meeting agrees, the relationship and couple are taken under the care of the Meeting. This includes a Meeting for Worship at which the couple states their intentions, the Meeting witnessing this, and a celebration to mark the occasion. The care of the Meeting means that the couple is surrounded by a loving community which
may take action as necessary to support the well-being of the two individuals, of the relationship itself, and of any children involved. The Meeting offers this care in the form of support and guidance to every couple in the Meeting.

When a couple unknown to the Meeting community request a “Quaker wedding” they may be allowed to rent the meetinghouse and can be instructed in how a wedding after the manner of Friends is conducted. However, for the Meeting to take a committed relationship or marriage under its care, at least one of the two individuals is currently a member or a regular attender of the Meeting.

**Clearness Process**

**Request**

When two people wish to have their covenant relationship taken under the care of the Monthly Meeting, they write a letter to the Meeting, in care of the Clerk, stating their intention and requesting the Meeting to begin the clearness process. In the good order of Friends it is expected that a minimum of three months will be needed between the sending of the request and the desired date of the celebration.

**Clearness Committee**

When the couple requests that their commitment be taken under the care of the Meeting, the Pastoral Care Committee or the Meeting appoints a Clearness Committee. It is important that members asked to serve be free of time constraints, be open to prayerful consideration regarding the right course of action, and be individuals well-versed in Friends’ practice.

The couple and the Clearness Committee meet together and separately for thoughtful and prayerful discussions to seek Divine guidance regarding the proposed celebration. The committee or the couple may present specific queries or topics to give direction to the discussions, or discussion may arise out of worship. It is important that those participating in the clearness process approach each meeting with open hearts and minds, that sufficient time be allotted for thorough understanding and seasoning to occur, and that any encumbrance be explored to ensure that all parties are free of conflicting obligations. The committee’s job is to help the couple take stock of the breadth and depth of their commitment and prepare for a shared lifetime together, including times both difficult and joyous.

It is well for the committee to have topics in mind and to see that they are covered. Most of these subjects will arise naturally in the course of the interviews, and it is preferable if the prospective partners feel free to broach them themselves.

1. **Background and Acquaintance.** How well do the couple know each other? What are their basic common values? How do they adapt to differences in background, religion, temperament, and interests? Are they willing to listen deeply and respectfully to each other? Can they meet their differences with humor, mutual respect, patience, and generosity? Do they have the courage and the willingness to go together for outside guidance with any problem they are unable to solve?

2. **Religious Beliefs, Feelings, Aspirations.** Do they see commitment or marriage as a spiritual relationship to be entered into with appreciation of its Divine basis? How do they propose to meet their religious needs as a couple? How do they plan to make their relationship accessible to Divine assistance? How do they endeavor to hold each other in the Light?

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1 “The Oversight Committee” is a traditional Quaker name for the committee that organizes memorials, handles requests for membership or marriage under the care of the meeting, and coordinates help and comfort for Friends in need. In many meetings this function is combined with care for the community’s spiritual life, hence the common name "Ministry & Oversight Committee" —the name used by NPYM and its Quarterly Meetings. However, "oversight" has connotations of slavery for many Friends, and they may use some other name in their meetings, such as Ministry & Counsel for a combined committee. Each Friends’ group names its committees in its own way. Reflecting the concern about “oversight,” this Faith and Practice uses “Pastoral Care Committee” for the committee in a local Friends’ group that has responsibility for memorials, memberships, etc.
3. **Growth and Fulfillment.** Do they think of themselves as trusted and equal partners, sharing responsibilities and decisions? In what ways are they supportive of each other’s goals for personal growth and fulfillment? How do they communicate their feelings and needs, their dreams and fears to each other? Are they able to discuss their expectations of the intimate life they will share together?

4. **Daily Living.** How do they discuss and work through questions regarding the use and management of money? How will they resolve minor daily issues such as who takes out the trash or does the dishes? How do they deal with anger when it arises within the relationship? What ways have they found to resolve lifestyle issues, such as one being a morning person and one being an evening person, so that neither feels personally rejected? Have they explored attitudes towards holidays and gift-giving? Have they discussed the last names each will use?

5. **Remarriage.** A new marriage or committed relationship following the loss of a partner takes much faith, strength, and courage. Remarriage will raise questions for the couple such as: Has a suitable period of time elapsed to establish the new relationship? Are the circumstances of the new relationship likely to make it successful and fruitful in spiritual happiness? Will the current and former partner have any interactions with each other—and if so, how is their current relationship with each other? What consideration have they given to assuring the welfare and legal rights of all the children involved? Can the children be involved in the clearness process? If the new relationship involves blending a family, has the couple given thorough and prayerful consideration to the new family structure?

6. **Relationships with Others.** Are they aware of the need for developing a variety of other friendships that contribute both to individual growth and to their relationship? Have they considered together whether or not they desire children: the challenges as well as the joys children would bring, and the responsibilities for nurturing, guiding, and disciplining them? How do they view their relationships with each other’s families and their obligations toward society?

7. **Relationship with the Monthly Meeting.** What does the couple expect the Monthly Meeting to do to support their relationship? Are there other religious group memberships?

8. **Prior Commitments.** Do they have obligations, personal or financial, which need to be met or discharged? If one of the partners holds membership in another Monthly Meeting, the Clearness Committee should consult with that Meeting.

9. **Attitude of Families.** What are the views of their families toward the prospective marriage or commitment? Are there problems in these familial relationships that the couple should consider as to their impact on the couple’s relationship?
10. **Timing.** Is this an appropriate time in each partner’s life to undertake the new responsibilities and other changes that would result from a formal commitment to one another?

11. **The Celebration.** How do they view the Meeting for Worship on the occasion of marriage or celebration which is to take place under the care of the Meeting? Are they familiar with the procedure? Do they appreciate the values involved in the Quaker form of commitment?

When the couple and the committee are clear to recommend that the Meeting take the couple under its care, the Clearness Committee reports its endorsement to the Pastoral Care Committee, which carries it to the Monthly Meeting, indicating that unity has been found. The Monthly Meeting accepts the report for consideration and seasoning and, when it is able to unite in approving the request, appoints an Arrangements Committee, guided by the couple’s wishes. The Arrangements Committee and the couple set a time and a place for the Meeting for Worship.

It may be that unity to move forward is not readily found. The committee and the couple may choose to continue seeking God’s will in this matter, or they may choose to lay aside the request indefinitely or permanently. When the right course of action is clear, the Clearness Committee reports that to the Pastoral Care Committee.

**Arrangements Committee**

This committee, appointed by the Monthly Meeting, works with the couple to ensure that the couple’s desires are met regarding the Meeting for Worship in celebration of the couple’s commitment to one another: that it is accomplished with simplicity, dignity, and reverence. The reception, if any, is also part of the committee’s responsibility.

Marriage after the manner of Friends entails two documents. One is the Quaker certificate, the other the state’s certificate. Couples who meet their state’s legal marriage requirements may wish to have their marriage legally recognized. If they do, it is their responsibility to acquire the marriage license; the Arrangements Committee arranges for the signature (usually of the Clerk of the Meeting) on the state’s certificate of marriage and files it with the county. The state recognizes the couple as legally married when the certificate of marriage is signed and filed. The committee and the couple may be led to alter the state certificate, with appropriate legal advice, to reflect the actual practice of Friends.

**Meeting to Celebrate Commitment**

The Meeting for Worship for the celebration gathers in silence at the appointed time. A description of marriage after the manner of Friends and of customary speech during the wedding is explained in the invitations and early in the Meeting. During worship the couple will rise, take each other by the hand, and each, speaking in turn, declare in words such as:

*In the presence of God, and before these our Friends, I take thee___________, to be my (wife/husband/partner), promising, with Divine assistance, to be unto thee a loving and faithful (husband/wife/partner), as long as we both shall live.*

Or

*In the presence of God, and before these our Friends, I commit myself to you, __________, endeavoring, with Divine assistance, to be a loving and faithful (husband/wife/partner).*

The couple is joined together by their vows; the Meeting and all at the ceremony are the witnesses. Worship continues, often with rich vocal ministry, and is closed by the Arrangements Committee, or other Friends approved by them.

Traditionally couples sign the Quaker marriage certificate directly after making their vows, attesting to their commitment. It is available for signing by Friends and others attending the Meeting at its close. The certificate is usually headed with the vows of the couple’s choosing, and it includes the names of the couple,
the date of the Meeting for Worship, and the fact that the relationship is under the care of the named Monthly Meeting. Examples of certificates are available from the Yearly Meeting.

The couple may use variations of these procedures with the approval of their Arrangements Committee.

**Meeting’s Care for the Relationship**

The Meeting’s care of a relationship does not end with the celebration. Meetings have an important role in nurturing, supporting, and celebrating all individuals who attend, as well as the couples under their care. In a loving community of persons of similar religious values and priorities, couples can be sustained and guided in their efforts to build an enduring relationship. Meetings may nurture committed relationships in many ways: workshops and supportive discussion groups, celebration of anniversaries, Meetings for Worship for the renewal of vows, and committees for clearness.

Some Meetings offer ongoing care, with the Clearness Committee for marriage becoming a Continuing Care of the Marriage Committee that meets with the couple once a year for reflection on their marriage. The Continuing Care Committee may report in writing to the Pastoral Care Committee. The couples under Continuing Care find it personally helpful, and it also helps clarify their relationship to the Meeting.

Friends are frequently very private and reluctant to bring forth personal or relationship problems. Nevertheless, each couple must be aware that their committed relationship has far-reaching effects on others, including those in Meeting. In taking the couple under its care, the Meeting assumes the responsibility to be steadfast and direct, as well as sensitive, in fulfilling its obligation of care, in the hope that the couple is willing to seek Divine help and to make use of the assistance the Meeting is able to provide. If a couple is in conflict, Meeting does not assume that the partners will come to Meeting as a couple to seek assistance, but will offer its assistance. However, neither the Meeting nor any committee takes on the role of therapist or psychological counselor.

**Care for commitments made outside the Meeting.** If a member is married or celebrates a commitment outside the care of the Meeting, the Pastoral Care Committee arranges for someone to visit with the new couple, expressing the Meeting’s care and assuring them that the non-member partner will be made welcome.

When a couple has been married under the care of another Meeting, in another religious tradition, or in a civil proceeding, the partners may ask the Pastoral Care Committee to have their relationship taken under the care of the current Meeting. If so, a Clearness Committee can be appointed and the same process of recommendation to the Meeting may be followed, with amended queries, and ending with the Meeting’s acceptance of the care of the relationship.

We thank God then, for the pleasures, joys and triumphs of life together; for the cups of tea we bring each other, and the seedlings in the garden frame; for the domestic drama of meetings and partings, sickness and recovery; for the grace of occasional extravagance, flowers on birthdays and unexpected presents; for talk at evenings of the events of the day; for the ecstasy of caresses; for gay mockery at each other’s follies; for plans and projects, fun and struggle; praying that we may neither neglect nor undervalue these things, nor be tempted to think of them as self-contained and self-sufficient.

*London Yearly Meeting, Faith and Practice, 1960*
Renewal of Vows

A couple joined together outside of the Meeting or a couple that has been married for many years may desire to renew their vows in the presence of the Divine and the loving community of their Meeting. The couple asks for a Clearness Committee, through the Pastoral Care Committee, to explore the health of their relationship and to chart their future. If the couple and the Clearness Committee reach clarity, they recommend to the Pastoral Care Committee that the couple reaffirm their vows in a called Meeting for Worship. This celebration is an opportunity for the Meeting to express its loving support of the couple.

Separation and Divorce

“If someone from my Meeting had just sat with me to hold my separating marriage in the Light for 15 minutes, it would have made all the difference in the world to me.”

An NPYM Friend, 2012

Committed relationships can experience both fulfillment and tension. Whether or not their relationship is formally under the Meeting’s care, if a couple is encountering difficulties and their relationship is under strain, they are encouraged to seek assistance through the Pastoral Care Committee. Meetings wisely exercise caution in providing such assistance. Individuals and committees in Meetings rarely possess the training and expertise necessary to counsel couples in conflict in areas of psychology and the law. The Pastoral Care Committee may refer the couple to a qualified counselor. Meetings understand that emotions during such intimate conflict may be powerful and destructive, both to the individuals and to the Meeting. Some couples do not want the Meeting involved in their conflict; the Meeting recognizes and honors that wish. Meetings are advised not to take sides in the separation and to avoid the enforcement or management of legal no-contact orders.

No marriage or committed relationship should be terminated lightly or quickly. If, after thoughtful and prayerful consideration and a period of seasoning, the couple finds that serious contemplation of separation or divorce is advisable, they are encouraged to seek further clearness through the Pastoral Care Committee. If the couple requests a Clearness Committee, either as a couple or as individuals, the Meeting provides it, recognizing that such a committee can provide spiritual guidance, but not psychological or legal consultation. The Clearness Committee meets to foster compassionate communication so that the couple’s decisions can be made in a spirit of forgiveness. It is generally preferable to have one Clearness Committee for the couple. When it proves necessary to have a separate committee for each partner, the two committees work together closely and may meet jointly at intervals to maintain communication. The Clearness Committee members are not marriage counselors or problem-solvers; instead they offer to walk on a painful journey with the family, reminding them to seek God’s assistance with every step.

A dissolution moves forward when it is clear that the marriage or committed relationship no longer exists.

When there is an abusive relationship, immediate separation may be necessary to protect all those involved from further harm.

When children are involved, the Meeting should remember their enduring need for love and security, both at home and in the Meeting community, and take care to protect them so that they are not turned against either parent.

When both individuals in the separating or divorcing couple are active in the same Meeting, one or both may feel alienated from further participation there. If the Meeting has taken an active role in the clearness process, the sense of alienation may be lessened, and separation may proceed with tenderness and charity. All in the Meeting are lovingly advised to answer that of God in both individuals. When an individual is going through a painful divorce, sometimes a word spoken in love will make a tremendous difference. The Meeting community may have its own sense of failure and loss to work through.
We would counsel Friends to take timely advice in periods of difficulty. The early sharing of problems with sympathetic Friends or marriage counsellors can often bring release from misunderstandings and give positive help towards new joy together. Friends ought to be able to do this, but much will depend on the quality of our life together in the Society. If marriages among us fail, we are all part of that failure. We need to be more sensitive to each other’s needs, knowing one another in the things which are material as in the things which are eternal.

Marriage & Parenthood Committee, 1956
London Yearly Meeting, Faith and Practice, 1972

Chapter “Marriage and Committed Relationships”
revised for use by North Pacific Yearly Meeting
of the Religious Society of Friends
10/2013
Death and Memorials

For I am sure that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Romans 8:38-39

They that love beyond the World cannot be separated by it. Death cannot kill what never dies. Nor can Spirits ever be divided that love and live in the same Divine Principle.... They live in one another still.

William Penn, 1693

Death is no more than a turning of us over from time to eternity.

William Penn, 1693

Eternity is at our hearts, pressing upon our time-worn lives, warming us with intimations of an astounding destiny, calling us home to Itself.

Thomas Kelly, 1941

DEATH OFTEN FACES US with the most difficult of questions, yet it may be the occasion of our most profound insights into the meaning of life. As Friends seek to surround the bereaved with love and care, the sustaining power of God can bring to all concerned not only courage but a transforming truth about death and life itself. Although life instinctively avoids death, death is not the opposite of life. It is essential to the ongoing, changing nature of life.

When Friends suffer the loss of a loved one there is sustaining strength in the loving concern and helpfulness of the Meeting and its members. It is important to be prepared beforehand about the Meeting’s responsibilities at the time of death. The Committee on Oversight carries the main responsibility. It should have on hand, and all in Meeting should be familiar with, “When Death Occurs in the Meeting,” a resource handbook for Meetings.* It should be informed about legal requirements and available community facilities, including those for the use of organs or the use of the body for scientific purposes. It is helpful to have a general plan of procedure worked out in advance and to have acquainted appropriate mortuaries with Friends’ attitudes and desires, thus reducing explanations to a minimum at the time of death. Many Friends belong to memorial societies which contract with given mortuaries in an area for prompt, simple, and inexpensive disposition of the body, frequently through cremation.** It is useful to keep on file, often with membership records, suggestions from members about arrangements desired at the time of their death, including a list of persons to be notified. A suggested form for this purpose is found on p. _____. Meetings are responsible to remind members to review and update this information every few years.


** Names and addresses of memorial societies may be obtained from: Continental Association of Funeral and Memorial Societies, Suite 1100, 1828 L St. NW, Washington, DC 20036.

Friends are also encouraged to write a will and not to postpone dealing with this important matter. The will must be kept current in order to provide properly for members of the family, particularly minor children, and for the stewardship of property. A simple will can be written, but to be most helpful to the family it must be written with the knowledge of state laws.

It is the responsibility of the Committee on Oversight to give whatever specific help may be necessary when death comes, and Friends are urged to make their needs known. The committee asks appropriate Friends to visit and counsel...
with the family or friends of the deceased, and to offer any needed assistance such as notifying relatives and friends or helping to plan a service, and to assist in whatever ways the particular situation suggests.

Friends’ testimony on simplicity, with consideration for the wishes of the family, should govern the arrangements to be made. Friends generally feel that prompt and simple disposition of the body should be followed at a suitable time by a Memorial Meeting held in the regular place of worship or at some other suitable place. For Friends, a Memorial Meeting is a Meeting for Worship on the occasion of death. Such a Memorial Meeting is approached in a spirit of peace and trust. It is an opportunity to come together to celebrate in the Light a life that has held meaning for us and to support each other in healing our grief. Music or a prepared statement may be used if consistent with the spirit of the Meeting and the desire of the family. The use of flowers in such a Meeting is much the same as it might be in a Meeting for Worship. If persons other than Friends are expected to be present, it is helpful to have available a prepared statement explaining Friends’ Memorial Meetings, or for a selected Friend to talk briefly about the manner of the Meeting near its beginning. Some Meetings follow the practice of reading a brief biography of the deceased Friend and find that it frequently supplies information and insights of which more recent acquaintances have been unaware, and helps to draw together a group representing diverse areas of the Friend’s life.

The Committee on Oversight prepares a memorial minute for a deceased member and presents it to the next Monthly Meeting for inclusion in the minutes, and forwards the memorial minute to the Yearly Meeting. Copies of the minute may also be sent to Friends’ publications.

**Information and Instructions on Final Affairs**

Name ________________________ Meeting ______________________
Address ________________________ Soc. Sec. No. ____________

I request that the Society of Friends carry out the following upon my death:

The information below may help the Society of Friends carry out my wishes:

1. Persons to notify immediately (next of kin, local contacts, executor, etc.): Use back of form for additional names.
   Name ________________________ Name ________________________
   Address ________________________ Address ________________________
   Telephone ________________________ Telephone ________________________
   Relationship ________________________ Relationship ________________________

2. Member of Memorial Society: Yes ____________ No ____________
   Name ________________________
   Address ________________________ Telephone ________________________

3. Disposal of Body: Burial ____________ Cremation ____________
   Medical/Scientific Uses ________________________
   Disposal of Ashes ________________________
   Cemetery Preferred ____________ Common plot ____________ Family plot ____________
   Location of: Deed ____________ Release papers ____________
   Undertaker Preferred ________________________

4. Burial Insurance: Company ____________ Policy No. ____________
   If no insurance, the expenses will be met as follows:

5. Services Desired (include pertinent details, using back of form if needed):
   Memorial Meeting for Worship ____________ Funeral ____________ Other ____________
6. Flowers will be accepted: Yes ____________ No ____________ Where ____________
In lieu of flowers, contributions may be made to: _______________________
7. Special instructions if death is distant from home:
8. Location of: Will ____________ Insurance policies ____________
9. If no surviving parent, instructions on care of minor children: (over)
10. Information for Death Certificate (must agree with legal records and policies):

Full Legal Name________________________
    Present Address________________________
    Date of Birth ____________ Birthplace ____________ Citizenship ____________
    Occupation ____________ Present Employer ____________
    Employer’s Address ________________________
    Father’s Full Name ________________________
    Mother’s Maiden Name ________________________
    Signature ________________________ Date ____________
    Received for Meeting by ________________________ Date ____________
New Gatherings of Friends

NORTH PACIFIC YEARLY MEETING is concerned that all who are moved to worship God after the manner of Friends may be able to do so by participation in a Worship Group, a Preparative Meeting, or a Monthly Meeting. In areas where no Friends Meetings exist, individual Friends and those drawn to Friends’ ways are encouraged to meet together for worship and to seek Divine guidance. A Worship Group may also evolve when an established Monthly Meeting has grown so large that it becomes desirable for a group to meet separately, or when some of its members live at a great distance from the Meeting.

Worship Groups

A Worship Group is a gathering of persons who meet regularly for worship after the manner of Friends and desire to be identified with the principles and practices of the Religious Society of Friends. Such a group may organize independently or may be set up with the encouragement of a Monthly Meeting for Friends and other interested persons living in a certain area. Worship Groups may find Meeting for Worship their only activity, and it is acceptable to continue in this fashion for an indefinite time. Other Worship Groups are large from their beginning or grow rapidly and often undertake activities such as shared meals, reading groups, study groups, discussion groups, service projects, religious education, public witness, or worship-sharing groups. Worship Groups need to be mindful of the danger of attempting too many things during their initial enthusiasm or of having an individual or couple carry all the responsibility, for this can invite exhaustion and disillusionment.

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

As a Worship Group develops, it is encouraged to relate itself to an established Monthly Meeting by asking to come under its care. The Monthly Meeting appoints a Committee of Oversight to be available for support and guidance, but this action does not presume any particular path of development. It does, however, establish an official relationship with the Religious Society of Friends and provides an avenue for membership, which comes only through a Monthly Meeting. Before a Worship Group feels ready to affiliate with a Monthly Meeting, it may need contact, information, advice, or other support from established Friends. It should feel free to ask one or two members of the Committee on Ministry and Oversight of the Quarterly Meeting, or of a Monthly Meeting, to visit and help them.

A Worship Group usually names one of the group to serve as the convenor and correspondent of the group. Communications from Monthly and regional Meetings and other Friends’ groups or organizations are addressed to the correspondent, who is responsible for sharing these with the entire group. It is important to keep corresponding bodies informed when a new correspondent is chosen. Each group needs organize only to the degree which is right for it at a particular time. It should not, however, avoid whatever organization is needed to nurture the interests and concerns of its participants, including children, and to provide an avenue for contacts with other Friends’ groups and with the wider body of the Society of Friends, both of which can enrich the life of a Worship Group. A Worship Group may not receive members, hold weddings, or otherwise act formally as an established Meeting. Such actions must be carried out through a Monthly Meeting, usually the one to which the Worship Group is related, and to which appropriate application is made.

The development of organization in a Worship Group follows no set pattern and proceeds only as necessary or desirable for the Group. Organization often progresses in ways leading to the status of a Preparative Meeting. During this period a Worship Group is encouraged to call upon the appointed Committee of Oversight for encouragement,
advice, or other help it needs. When a Worship Group feels it is ready to organize and conduct business in the manner of an established Meeting, it may ask the Monthly Meeting to which it is related for Preparative Meeting status. Occasionally a Worship Group develops in its organization to the point where it is acting as a Preparative Meeting even though it has never asked to be so recognized. In such a situation it may be appropriate to apply for Monthly Meeting status without first becoming a Preparative Meeting.

**Preparative Meetings***

* The term “Preparative Meeting” is used here in a somewhat different sense from its use by British Friends.

A Preparative Meeting is a Meeting for Worship and for Business which is under the care of, and reports regularly to, a Monthly Meeting, and which ordinarily looks forward to becoming a Monthly Meeting. A Preparative Meeting may be recognized by a Monthly Meeting when a Worship Group asks to be established as such or when a group of experienced Friends, desiring to organize as a Preparative Meeting, asks for this recognition.

A Preparative Meeting has the continuing care and counsel of a Committee of Oversight appointed by the Monthly Meeting and including a member of the Monthly Meeting Committee on Ministry and Oversight. A Preparative Meeting has officers and committees as needed, after the manner of a Monthly Meeting, holds a Meeting for Business once a month, and may receive and distribute funds on behalf of its constituents. It regularly sends a copy of the minutes of its Meeting for Business to its Committee of Oversight. A Preparative Meeting may not receive members, hold weddings, or otherwise act formally as an established Meeting; such actions are brought to and carried out through the Monthly Meeting to which it is related. Friends participating in a Preparative Meeting are urged to hold their membership in the overseeing Monthly Meeting. Friends who already are members of other Meetings should request transfer of their membership to the overseeing Monthly Meeting until the Preparative Meeting becomes a Monthly Meeting.

Preparative Meetings look forward to such growth and development as may enable them to become Monthly Meetings, though this process depends upon many factors and there may be great differences in the time required.

**Recognition of New Gatherings by Quarterly Meetings**

The recognition of a Worship Group or Preparative Meeting occurs normally through a Monthly Meeting, even when the two are separated by some distance. Occasionally, however, circumstances invite some other arrangement. The Worship Group or Preparative Meeting may then apply to the appropriate Quarterly Meeting. Either the Quarterly Meeting Committee on Ministry and Oversight acts as a Committee of Oversight for the developing group or it appoints a Committee of Oversight composed of suitable persons whose geographical locations make it possible for them to work together and who have time and energy for the task. Such arrangements through a Quarterly Meeting are logistically difficult and should be used only when there is no alternative.

**Establishment of Monthly Meetings**

A Monthly Meeting is usually established upon the initiative of a Preparative Meeting through recognition by a Quarterly Meeting.* When a Preparative Meeting feels ready for an independent existence as a Monthly Meeting and its Committee of Oversight agrees, the Preparative Meeting sends a letter to the Clerk of the overseeing Monthly Meeting stating these facts and asking that its request be forwarded to the Quarterly Meeting. If the Monthly Meeting concurs, it forwards this request to the Committee on Ministry and Oversight of the Quarterly Meeting. If the latter feels that it seems right and timely for the change in the status of the Preparative Meeting to take place, it recommends this to the Quarterly Meeting along with suggestions of Friends for a Visiting Committee. This committee of four or five Friends includes one or two members of the Monthly Meeting committee which has had the Preparative Meeting under its care, along with suitable and experienced Friends who have not been closely associated with the Preparative Meeting.

*Occasionally a Worship Group which has been functioning as a Preparative Meeting may request Monthly Meeting status. In this case the same procedure as outlined for a Preparative Meeting is followed.

The Visiting Committee meets with the prospective Meeting, making sure its members are aware of the responsibilities of a Monthly Meeting and giving all possible guidance. All necessary time should be taken; great care and deliberation at this stage may prevent complications later. The Visiting Committee should attend Meetings for Worship and Meetings for Business and visit with members and attenders of the Preparative Meeting. The following guidelines and questions are suggested for consideration:
1. **Application.** If the Meeting has not done so earlier, it should prepare in writing a statement telling why it wishes to become a Monthly Meeting and why it feels it is ready for this step. The Meeting should prepare a complete list of names and addresses of its members and attenders, indicating in which Meetings memberships are held.

2. **Spiritual Condition.** Does the Meeting function under divine guidance? Is the Meeting for Worship the center of the life of the Meeting? What is the vitality of the Meetings for Worship? Are they held in the spirit of expectant waiting and communion with God?

3. **History and experience.** How long has it been meeting? What relations does it have with other Meetings? What geographical area does it serve? Where and when is its Meeting for Worship? What is the usual attendance? How many Friends, other attenders and children are there in the Meeting? Of the families taking responsibility for the Meeting, how many appear well settled in the area? What are the Meeting’s social concerns?

4. **Evidence of good order.** Has the Meeting studied *Faith and Practice* of North Pacific Yearly Meeting? Does it hold a Meeting for Business once a month? How are Minutes taken and approved? Are the functions of Clerk and other officers understood? What committees does it have? Are the functions of the Committee on Ministry and Oversight understood; are these functions being carried out? Are financial matters being handled in an orderly manner? How does it handle the selection of the Meeting’s officers and committees and of a Nominating Committee? How are children related to the Meeting? Does it understand the importance of religious education programs for children and adults?

   If the Visiting Committee agrees that the Preparative Meeting is ready to become a Monthly Meeting, it prepares a written report, including reference to the above guidelines, and presents this report at the next Quarterly Meeting, with a recommendation for action. Approval must be given by the Quarterly Meeting for final designation as a Monthly Meeting. After approval, a date is set for a meeting for organization at which the Visiting Committee is usually present. The Visiting Committee takes on oversight of the new Meeting and is available to it for consultation for at least a year following its recognition.

   The action by the Quarterly Meeting is forwarded to the Yearly Meeting, which records the new Monthly Meeting as a member of that body. The Clerk of the Quarterly Meeting notifies the Clerk of the Steering Committee and the Presiding Clerk of the Yearly Meeting that the new Monthly Meeting has been established by the Quarterly Meeting. The Steering Committee minutes the recognition of the new Monthly Meeting as part of North Pacific Yearly Meeting. A new Meeting functions and is listed as a Monthly Meeting as soon as it has been established.
A QUARTERLY MEETING is a cooperative association of two or more Monthly Meetings in a given geographical area and is composed of all the members of its constituent Monthly Meetings, Preparative Meetings, and Worship Groups, as well as interested persons within its area who are isolated from any established Friends group.

Traditionally a Quarterly Meeting met four times a year. A regional meeting which met twice a year was called a Half-Yearly Meeting. It has become the practice of this Yearly Meeting to use the term Quarterly Meeting for any regional meeting composed of Monthly Meetings, regardless of how often it meets.

The purpose of a Quarterly Meeting is to strengthen the life and fellowship of Meetings and other Friends groups in the area and to provide a link in transmitting business and other information from them to, or to them from, North Pacific Yearly Meeting. A Quarterly Meeting contributes in many different ways to the growth of the spiritual life and fellowship of its Meetings and other Friends in its area, including children, Junior Friends, and Young Friends. The session itself contributes by providing religious fellowship, a wider variety of ministry during worship than individual Meetings usually experience, and programs which provide for consideration of the deeper interests of the Society of Friends. Outside the regular session, the Quarterly Meeting contributes by developing programs for its young people, by arranging for retreats and other gatherings, and by encouraging and coordinating intervisitation throughout its area.

An important function of a Quarterly Meeting is to hear informal reports on activities from constituent groups and, at its spring session, to receive their more formal State of Society Reports. It is in this informal and formal sharing that Friends become aware of the state of the spiritual life within the Quarter.

A Quarterly Meeting provides an opportunity for considering and acting upon concerns from individuals and Meetings and forwarding those approved to the Steering Committee or Annual Session of the Yearly Meeting. It also may provide services or address issues which pertain to all Friends but for which there may not be sufficient concern or energy in any one individual Meeting. A Quarterly Meeting is concerned for the condition of its constituent groups, strengthening and supporting them. It is responsible for the nurture of new gatherings of Friends and, when the time comes, reports their establishment as Monthly Meetings to the Yearly Meeting. Among other functions, it would also be the appropriate body to consider a request from a Monthly Meeting whose members believe it should be laid down or united with another Meeting.

To carry out its responsibilities, a Quarterly Meeting meets regularly, appoints necessary officers and committees, and conducts its business in the usual manner of Friends. It collects and administers funds as needed. It may appoint an Interim or Continuing Committee to help plan for its sessions and act for it between sessions within limits agreed upon. The Quarterly Meeting Committee on Ministry and Oversight is composed of experienced and spiritually sensitive Friends who are able to serve on a working committee. This committee aids in the nurture of the spiritual life of Friends of all ages, contributes to the care and counsel of Meetings and Worship Groups, and advises on the good order and spiritual life of the Quarterly Meeting sessions. The Committees on Ministry and Oversight of the Quarterly Meetings constitute the Yearly Meeting Committee on Ministry and Oversight which functions primarily during the Annual Session. It also chooses one of its members to serve on the Friend-in-Residence Committee of the Yearly Meeting. The Quarterly Meeting Ministry and Oversight Clerk serves as a member of the Yearly Meeting Outreach Committee.

* Specific procedures vary among Quarterly Meetings. Quarterly Meeting Handbooks should be consulted.

A Quarterly Meeting may be established upon Yearly Meeting approval of a request from two or more Monthly Meetings or of a request from a Quarterly Meeting which wishes to be divided into two such meetings. A Quarterly Meeting may also be set up upon the initiative of the Yearly Meeting. In any such instance, the Yearly Meeting appoints a committee to assist in the organization, and receives the recommendation of that committee before recognizing the Quarterly Meeting. Where geographical expanses or other circumstances warrant, the formation of associations or gatherings other than Quarterly Meetings may prove helpful.
The Yearly Meeting

Mission & Vision

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

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

North Pacific Yearly Meeting will

- Hold an Annual Session to bring Friends together to worship, attend to business, and build community for all ages.
- Serve as an ongoing resource to its Meetings, Worship Groups, and Isolated Friends by: fostering leadership; facilitating communication about and among Friends within NPYM; providing opportunities for education, service, and spiritual enrichment; encouraging visitation among Friends; publishing *Faith and Practice* and other resources; supporting Meetings and Worship Groups to make Quakers a more visible presence.
- Nurture spiritual development and a sense of community for our children and young people, and support their transition to adult participation in the life of Friends.
- Support discernment and implementation of traditional and emerging concerns arising from Friends’ Testimonies.
- Foster relationships with the wider world of Friends.

The Yearly Meeting is composed of the members of its Monthly Meetings, including those in Preparative Meetings and Worship Groups, whose privilege and responsibility it is to participate in and support the Yearly Meeting and its Annual Session. NPYM’s affiliated groups and individuals are located in the states of Idaho, Montana, Oregon, and Washington.

The right ordering of the Yearly Meeting requires care, thought, and prayer. This right ordering depends not only on individual strengths and abilities, but on the leading of the Spirit. Preparation for and participation in the Annual Session is an opportunity for the body of the Yearly Meeting to enjoy and benefit from the many gifts of individuals in its widely scattered meetings and for the Yearly Meeting to be of service to them.

We welcome to our Annual Session attenders of Monthly Meetings, Preparative Meetings, and Worship Groups; Isolated Friends in our region, members of other Yearly Meetings; and all interested persons. We gather to search in the Light, to find renewal, and to celebrate our joy in coming together again. We have faith that all who attend do so as part of their personal seeking of God’s truth. Friends of all ages benefit from and contribute to the Annual Session. Although there may be programs for children, Central Friends, Junior Friends, and Young Adult Friends, all are an integral part of this experience.

The Yearly Meeting holds its Annual Session in the summer, rotating locations throughout our region. Annual Session provides many opportunities for deepening fellowship and the life of the Spirit. The plenary sessions, occasions for dealing with business, also provide opportunities for spiritual growth. They consider
reports from NPYM committees and Friends’ organizations, give attention to communications, including preparation of an “Epistle to Friends Everywhere;” and deal with appropriate business and concerns. In addition to corporate worship, other opportunities for spiritual enrichment include worship-sharing groups, interest groups, programs for children and Junior Friends, meetings of Young Adult Friends, the presence and inspiration of visiting Friends, and Friendly visiting.

NPYM makes its major decisions in plenary session at the Annual Session. Other decisions may be made between Annual Sessions by the Coordinating Committee or Executive Committee.

**Bringing Concerns before the Yearly Meeting**

A genuine concern is a spiritual matter. Usually a concern arises in the conscience of an individual and is initially seasoned in a local Meeting or committee. A concern may come to Annual Session from a variety of sources:

- From a Monthly Meeting, Quarterly Meeting, or other group of Friends.
- From the Coordinating Committee or from an NPYM standing committee.
- From an ad hoc committee of the Yearly Meeting.
- From the floor of the Annual Session.

Regardless of where a concern starts, it is seasoned before being considered at Annual Session. It is expected that concerns that come before the Yearly Meeting be considered widely throughout the Yearly Meeting before placement on an Annual Session agenda. To help with the discernment process it is suggested that Friends use the following queries as a basis for preparing a concern that may come to the Yearly Meeting. Responses to these queries may be provided as a separate document.

- What is the concern? What specific action are you asking the Yearly Meeting to take?
- Who is bringing this concern to Annual Session?
- Why is this concern particularly appropriate for Yearly Meeting action as opposed to action by many local meetings?
- What decisions and actions have taken place in local or regional groups?
- How have you been in contact with other meetings or groups in NPYM about this concern?
- How have their viewpoints been integrated into this concern?
- Have you worked with a Yearly Meeting committee on this issue? What is their recommendation?
- Does the Yearly Meeting have the capacity to carry out the proposed action?

To allow adequate time for Friends to season the matter, the Presiding Clerk is notified five months prior to Annual Session. In the intervening time the Presiding Clerk will work with those presenting the concern to discern the best possible course of action. The final decision may include any or all of the following:

- Send the concerns to one of the Yearly Meeting committees for seasoning or action.
- Work with the Friends presenting the concern and appropriate Yearly Meeting committees to facilitate seasoning through other local meetings. Having other local meetings consider this concern and take action may mitigate the need for time on the Annual Session Agenda. If meetings and worship groups are asked for feedback before Annual Session, it is possible that the concerns will not make it to the upcoming Annual Session.
- Ask for time on the Spring Coordinating Committee agenda to season this concern. The Friends presenting the concern may be invited to attend that meeting.
- Ask the Friends presenting the concern to do further seasoning and discernment at the local, Quarterly Meeting, NPYM committee, or individual support group level.
- Decide after taking some of or all of the above actions that the concern is not appropriate for NPYM action at this time.
- In consultation with next year’s Presiding Clerk, decide whether to hold the item over for consideration next year.

If the concern is ready for Yearly Meeting consideration, a draft of the proposed minute, along with background material including responses to the queries, is given to the Presiding Clerk one month before the Annual Session.

In exceptional circumstances the Presiding Clerk may entertain a minute or concern from the floor of a Plenary Session. If so, it should be presented briefly and heard without discussion. Before such a concern is laid before the Plenary Session for its consideration, the Presiding Clerk usually consults with the Clerk of the Coordinating Committee and refers it to the appropriate Yearly Meeting committee for consideration. The concern may then be acted on in a later Plenary Session or may be referred for seasoning and consideration at another annual gathering.

When a concern is placed before a plenary session and unity is reached, the Yearly Meeting is under the burden to follow through with action appropriate to the concern.

**Relationships with Wider Friends Organizations**

North Pacific Yearly Meeting is an independent Yearly Meeting. Although we attempt to keep in touch with all Friends, we have formally affiliated with the following organizations.

1. **American Friends Service Committee (AFSC).** The Yearly Meeting appoints four Friends, serving overlapping three-year terms, to become members of the Corporation of the American Friends Service Committee.

2. **Friends Committee on National Legislation (FCNL).** The Yearly Meeting appoints six Friends, serving overlapping two-year terms (starting September 1), as representatives to the General Committee of FCNL.

3. **Friends for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer Concerns (FLGBTQC).** The Yearly Meeting appoints two Friends, serving overlapping two-year terms, as correspondents to FLGBTQC.

4. **Friends Peace Teams (FPT).** The Yearly Meeting appoints two Friends, serving overlapping three-year terms, as representatives to FPT.

5. **Friends World Committee for Consultation (FWCC).** The Yearly Meeting appoints four Friends, serving overlapping three-year terms, as representatives to FWCC’s Section of the Americas. Terms begin on the January 1st following appointment. The newly appointed representative is encouraged, both by the Yearly Meeting and by FWCC, to attend the annual Section meeting immediately following his/her July appointment even if that occurs before the his/her NPYM term starts.

The Yearly Meeting may send representatives to the FWCC Triennial Meeting, to be appointed at the NPYM Annual Session prior to the Triennial.

6. **Friends Bulletin Corporation.** Friends Bulletin Corporation publishes *Western Friend* (formerly *Friends Bulletin*), a periodical by and for Friends in Pacific Yearly Meeting, North Pacific Yearly Meeting, and Intermountain Yearly Meeting. NPYM appoints three Directors, one from each Quarterly Meeting, to the *Western Friend* Board of Directors, which guides both editorial and business aspects of publishing the periodical and other works.

7. **Quaker Earthcare Witness (QEW).** The Yearly Meeting appoints one representative and one alternate to the QEW Steering Committee.
As its representatives to organizations with which it is affiliated, the Yearly Meeting selects individuals who are suitable because of their interest, ability, experience, geographic distribution, and capacity to relate to the particular organization. The chief responsibility of these representatives is maintaining two-way communication between the organization and members of the Yearly Meeting. Representatives are encouraged to attend meetings of the organization, but it is sometimes more effective, as well as more economical of finances and energy, to bring to the Annual Session a person representing a particular organization.

Job descriptions for these representatives and correspondents are available from NPYM. A summary of the responsibilities of Yearly Meeting representatives to each affiliated organization is given to the representative at the time of appointment. The Yearly Meeting budget includes travel funds for representatives to attend meetings of affiliated organizations.

**Affiliation with Organizations** — NPYM is cautious about affiliating with other bodies, wanting to be certain that such action is both compatible with our understanding of Quakerism and within our capacity to carry out our responsibilities with integrity given our small financial and personnel resources. Accordingly, NPYM has a policy for considering affiliation with other organizations. The procedure starts with a request to affiliate (or to review an existing affiliation). Coordinating Committee then appoints an ad hoc committee of experienced Friends to explore the practical and spiritual dimensions and bring a recommendation to an Annual Session for decision. Continuing affiliations with outside organizations are reviewed periodically using a similar process.

**Yearly Meeting Finances**

The primary financial support for North Pacific Yearly Meeting comes from member meetings. The YM Treasurer uses each meeting’s annual statistical report to calculate the meeting’s contribution based on a per-member rate called an assessment. Each Monthly Meeting determines whether it will contribute for all its members or only for its faithfully participating members and attenders.

The Finance and Legal Committee prepares a budget for the organization each year and presents it to Annual Session for approval. Typical components of the budget include committee expenses; administrative expenses; support for NPYM representatives to other organizations; funds for Central Friends, Junior Friends, and Young Adult Friends; and contributions to other organizations plus a subsidy for the periodical *Western Friend*.

If memorial funds are received without a designation for a specific use, the Treasurer consults with the family or Coordinating Committee within six months, to identify a use for the money appropriate to the interests of the individual.

**Central Friends, Junior Friends, Young Adult Friends**

NPYM has adopted the following terms to describe specific age groups. Other Friends’ organizations may use different definitions.

- Central Friends - 6-8th grades
- Junior Friends – High School age Friends
- Young Adult Friends – post-high-school age (18) to about age 35

Central Friends, Junior Friends, and Young Adult Friends all write their own epistles “to Friends everywhere” at Annual Sessions.

**Central Friends**

In NPYM, “Central Friends” are the middle-school-age group: young people who have just finished fifth grade (or equivalent) through those have just finished eighth grade. There is a self-contained Central Friends program during Annual Session; there is often a camping trip before or after Annual Session.
Junior Friends

In NPYM, “Junior Friends” are the high school-age group: young people who have just finished eighth grade (or equivalent) through those who have just graduated from high school. Junior Friends choose their own officers and committees. They hold their own meetings for worship for business, following the good order of Friends. They manage their own budget with general direction from their advisors and technical assistance from the NPYM Treasurer as needed. Their program at Annual Session is self-contained although it usually includes participation in intergenerational worship-sharing. Junior Friends plan their own activities at Annual Session and throughout the year. They traditionally organize a camping trip before or after Annual Session and a ski trip in winter.

Junior Friends suggest nominees for Junior Friends Advisors to the NPYM Nominating Committee. The advisors assist Junior Friends with scheduling, arrangements, budgeting, and other logistics; serve as resources about Quaker process and the good order of Friends; and act as liaison between Junior Friends and the rest of NPYM. Junior Friends also invite others to serve as “Friendly Adult Presences” (FAPs) at events.

Junior Friends send representatives to the Coordinating Committee and the Annual Session Planning Committee.

Junior Friends maintain a Code of Conduct at all events, under the care of the Junior Friends Wellness Committee.

Young Adult Friends

In NPYM “Young Adult Friends” refers to the college and post-college age group, from high-school graduation through about age 35. Like the Junior Friends, Young Adult Friends choose their own officers and committees and hold their own meetings for worship for business following the good order of Friends. Their program at Annual Session is self-planned and largely self-contained although they share some activities with Junior Friends and participate in intergenerational worship-sharing. They typically meet at Annual Session in summer and at New Year’s.

Young Adult Friends nominate representatives to the Coordinating Committee and the Annual Session Planning Committee, and are encouraged to participate in NPYM standing committees as interests lead and circumstances permit.

NPYM helps host electronic communication for Young Adult Friends.

Yearly Meeting Officers

Yearly Meeting officers are nominated by the Nominating Committee and appointed by NPYM in plenary session during Annual Session. The Coordinating Committee may make appointments between Annual Sessions, or the Executive Committee between Coordinating Committee meetings. Most officers serve two-year terms beginning on October 1. Outgoing officers are expected to complete responsibilities related to the Annual Session and to orient new appointees who are responsible for new business. Officers are selected with regard for their qualifications, their ability to serve, their geographical representation, and their resources for leadership, present and potential.

The Presiding Clerk, Rising Clerk, Coordinating Committee Clerk, Coordinating Committee Associate Clerk, and Treasurer must be members of a Monthly Meeting within NPYM. All other positions may be held by any members or attenders.

Complete position descriptions for all Yearly Meeting offices are available electronically from NPYM via the internet or by request from the NPYM secretary. Summary descriptions follow here.

- The Presiding Clerk of the Yearly Meeting has responsibility for Annual Session as a whole. She works with the Annual Session Planning Committee to prepare for Annual Session; writes and publishes the welcoming “Call to Yearly Meeting;” and prepares agendas for and clerks all plenary
sessions. The Presiding Clerk serves as co-clerk of the Annual Session Planning Committee and clerks the Friend-In-Residence Committee. She is also a member ex officio of the Coordinating Committee and shares responsibility for seeing that the instructions of the Annual Session are carried out.

- The Rising Clerk prepares himself to step into the position of Presiding Clerk. The Rising Clerk is a member of the Executive Committee.

- The Annual Session Recording Clerk assists the Presiding Clerk in recording the minutes of the Annual Session plenary sessions, faithful to the spirit as well as the substance of the discussions, and prepares the proceedings in their final form. The Recording Clerk also records meetings of the Annual Session Planning Committee.

- The Coordinating Committee Clerk has responsibility to the Coordinating Committee (CC), made up of members appointed by monthly meetings as well as officers and clerks of standing committees (listed below). The CC Clerk facilitates networking among committees, meetings, and individual Friends and helps discern where decision-making on any question most appropriately rests. She serves as CC Associate Clerk for one year before and one year after her term as CC Clerk to assure continuity in CC leadership.

- The Coordinating Committee Associate Clerk assists the Coordinating Committee Clerk, clerks the Personnel Committee and coordinates the work of NPYM representatives, correspondents, and liaisons to Friends’ organizations. He also works with the Webkeeper to ensure that the NPYM website provides current and accurate information.

- The Coordinating Committee Recording Clerk is responsible for preparing minutes of Coordinating Committee meetings, faithful to the spirit as well as the substance of the discussions.

- The Treasurer maintains the financial records of the Yearly Meeting; receives and disburses monies for all NPYM funds, including Annual Session and Junior Friends, and reports on financial issues to the Finance & Legal Committee and to Annual Session. The Treasurer solicits annual assessments from each Monthly Meeting based on its statistical report as of June 1. The NPYM Treasurer is available as a mentor to the Junior Friends Treasurer.

- The Archivist of the Yearly Meeting gathers and preserves materials relating to the development and history of North Pacific Yearly Meeting and reports to Coordinating Committee and to the Annual Session as requested.

- The Webkeeper maintains the website www.npym.org, designing new pages and updating information as needed. To keep the site current, the Webkeeper works closely with the Coordinating Committee Associate Clerk, NPYM committee clerks, the Annual Session Registrar, and the NPYM secretary as well as with Quarterly Meeting clerks.

### Yearly Meeting Committees

*For it is the corporate Truth or Light for which Friends labor together, not the proof or justification of the rightness of any particular position.*

*Nancy Springer, 1980*

*Friends make their decisions … by concurrence in a sense of the meeting following full, free and prayerful consideration. Decisions made this way, Friends believe, may carry with them the inward consent of all persons involved, rather than their merely outward conformity.*

*Pacific Yearly Meeting Faith and Practice, 1973*

Except for those members of the Coordinating Committee who are appointed by Monthly Meetings, all members of Yearly Meeting committees are nominated by the Nominating Committee and are appointed at
Annual Session (or by the Coordinating Committee if between Annual Sessions or by the Executive Committee if between Coordinating Committee meetings). Most begin their terms of service on October 1. Outgoing members are expected to complete unfinished business.

Complete descriptions for all Yearly Meeting committees—with notes on members, terms, responsibilities, and typical annual timelines—are kept up to date on the NPYM website and are also available from the NPYM secretary or the Nominating Committee, which is responsible for keeping the descriptions accurate. Summary descriptions follow here.

The Coordinating Committee or the Yearly Meeting may set up other committees as need arises. When considering changes to the committee structure, Friends should take care that each committee is an aid, not an encumbrance to strengthening and supporting each other in our common search for Truth and Light.

**Standing Committees of NPYM**

**Coordinating Committee**

The Coordinating Committee (CC) supports and enriches the life of NPYM. It is the venue where NPYM standing committees and Monthly Meetings share about their work and inspiration. The committee identifies and links converging and emerging issues, and offers support to groups within NPYM. In addition, the committee provides support and oversight to NPYM Standing Committees.

The Coordinating Committee handles decisions that do not involve changes to policy, that are necessary to carry out the work of the Yearly Meeting, and that do not require full NPYM attention at Annual Session. The first step is to determine if the decision should be referred elsewhere. Discernment is necessary to identify which decisions can be handled at Coordinating Committee and which decisions rightly belong at Annual Session or in an NPYM standing committee, Monthly Meeting, or Quarterly Meeting.

**Committee on the Discipline**

The Committee on the Discipline is responsible for the development and subsequent revision of *Faith and Practice*, our Book of Discipline. The Yearly Meeting conceives of *Faith and Practice*, not as a finished product and final word, but as an evolving document, representing the growing experience of North Pacific Yearly Meeting Friends in seeking to know and follow the Inner Light. Members are encouraged to study, use, and appraise *Faith and Practice* in this spirit.

Suggested changes, which may in time be incorporated in a future edition, may evolve through the actions of Monthly and regional Meetings, and of the Yearly Meeting; or through the suggestions of committees, or individual Friends. These suggestions should be given in writing to the Committee on the Discipline for consideration.

**Executive Committee**

The Executive Committee consists of the Coordinating Committee Clerk, NPYM Presiding Clerk, Clerk of Ministry &Oversight Committee, Treasurer, Coordinating Committee Associate Clerk, and the Rising Clerk.

The Executive Committee can make decisions that are necessary to carry out the work of the Yearly Meeting. In particular, these include approval of nominations or expenditures (within the framework of the budget). The Executive Committee is also authorized to approve the hiring of staff. The Executive Committee can make decisions on behalf of NPYM as may be required outside of Annual Session and between Coordinating Committee meetings. The Coordinating Committee Clerk may consult the Executive Committee to determine where to refer the matter or whether Executive Committee needs to make a decision. All Executive Committee decisions shall be reported at the next Coordinating Committee meeting.
**Finance & Legal Committee**

The Finance & Legal Committee provides stewardship of financial and legal matters for NPYM, and support and oversight to the NPYM Treasurer. This committee prepares the annual budget for the Yearly Meeting, to be approved at Annual Session; develops policies and procedures involving fiscal and legal matters; makes recommendations on insurance and legal affairs; and provides oversight and support for other NPYM entities with annual budgets (e.g., Annual Session, Junior Friends).

**Information Technology Committee**

Information Technology (IT) refers to the methods, processes, and tools for generating, sharing, and storing information, along with the policies and procedures to protect the information from loss and misuse. The Information Technology Committee provides technical support and guidance for the IT needs of NPYM.

**Committee on Ministry & Oversight**

The Committee on Ministry & Oversight (M&O) fosters the spiritual life and good order of the Yearly Meeting as a whole and at Annual Session. Responsibilities include encouraging communication among meetings and worship groups; serve as a resource for local M&O committees; coordinating with other standing committees about trends and needs within the Yearly Meeting; planning retreats and other educational opportunities.

Responsibilities during Annual Session include orientation for first-time attenders at Annual Session; presentation of the State of the Meeting reports; Meeting for Memorials; care of the spiritual needs of individual attenders as needed; care of the closing Meeting for Worship.

**Nominating Committee**

The Nominating Committee carefully considers the needs of the Yearly Meeting positions and asks appropriate people if they will accept nominations to Yearly Meeting and Annual Session positions. The Committee prepares as full a slate as possible for approval at Annual Session. At other times of the year, nominations may be approved by the Coordinating Committee or the Executive Committee.

**Outreach & Visitation Committee**

The Outreach & Visitation Committee seeks ways to provide and stimulate personal visitation and other forms of communication throughout the Yearly Meeting, with a particular concern for Preparative Meetings, Worship Groups, and Friends isolated from any organized group. The work of the committee is meant to coordinate with and support Monthly Meetings, Quarterly Meetings, and NPYM’s Ministry and Oversight Committee in their respective responsibilities in this area.

**Peace & Social Concerns Committee**

This committee’s main purpose is to facilitate communication and networking among Meetings, Worship Groups, and other Friends on social and peace issues and emerging concerns. To do so, it networks with meetings and worship groups, NPYM representatives to Friends organizations working on peace and social justice issues, and other regional and national organizations that address issues of concern to NPYM Friends. This committee helps season peace and social concerns minutes to come before the Yearly Meeting as a whole.

**Site Committee**

The Site Committee is responsible for exploring and making site recommendations to NPYM about where future Annual Sessions might be held — typically on a six-year rotation (two years at a site in western Washington, two years in western Oregon, two years east of the Cascades). Site arrangements are typically made several years in advance. The committee reports to Coordinating Committee and works closely with the Presiding Clerk and the General Arrangements Clerk.
Youth Committee

The Youth Committee supports meetings and worship groups in their work with children, youth, and young adults. This committee nurtures spiritual development and a sense of community for our children and young people, and supports their transition to adult participation in the life of Friends.

This committee oversees disbursement of NPYM’s Youth Opportunity Fund.

Committees related to Annual Session

Annual Session Planning Committee

This committee plans and runs Annual Session. The Presiding Clerk of the Yearly Meeting and the General Arrangements Clerk convene the group, which includes:

- Children’s Program Coordinator
- General Arrangements Clerk
- General Arrangements Assistant Clerk
- Physical Arrangements Clerk
- Presiding Clerk
- Program Coordinator
- Registrar
- Volunteer Coordinator
- Representatives from Junior Friends and Young Adult Friends

The Annual Session Planning Committee appoints other positions necessary to the event, including Food Coordinator, Transportation Coordinator, Hospitality Coordinator, Creative Activities Coordinator, Worship-Sharing Group Coordinator, Interest Group Coordinator, “Daily Bulletin” Editor, and Bookstore Manager.

Epistle Committee

The Epistle Committee helps keep NPYM connected with the wider world of Friends through the use of Epistles. The Epistle Committee writes an Epistle “to Friends everywhere” describing the spirit of our Annual Session, which is then sent to Yearly Meetings around the world. The Epistle Committee receives and reviews Epistles from other Yearly Meetings and shares these with NPYM Friends.

Friend-in-Residence Committee

Each year the Yearly Meeting invites a Friend from outside its membership to attend and address the Annual Session. The person, nominated by the Friend-in-Residence Committee, is one whose experience and spiritual gifts are expected to enrich Friends at the Annual Session. The Friend-in-Residence gives a plenary session presentation and visits and interacts with Friends of all ages throughout the Annual Session.

Yearly Meeting Staff

Most work for the Yearly Meeting is done by volunteers. NPYM employs a secretary, who is hired and supervised by the Personnel Committee. This committee consists of the Coordinating Committee Clerk; the Associate Coordinating Committee Clerk (who clerks the Personnel Committee), and the Presiding Clerk of the Yearly Meeting.
Advices - Ideals stated as a continuing reminder of the basic faith and principles held to be essential to the life and witness of Friends.

Affirmation - A legal declaration made by Friends or others who conscientiously decline to take an oath.

Attender - One who attends and participates in Meeting activities fairly regularly but has not become a Member.

Birthright Member - Friend born of Quaker parents and recorded at birth on the membership rolls of the Meeting. Birthright membership is not a practice of North Pacific Yearly Meeting.

Breaking Meeting - Term used for the closing of the Meeting for Worship when a designated Friend shakes hands with the persons next to him or her. Following this all shake hands with their neighbors.

Centering Down - An endeavor to direct our conscious thought and to open our minds, in order that we may hear God speak directly to us.

Clearness Committee - A committee appointed to assist a person or the meeting to clarify thinking about a decision or concern.

Clerk - The clerk is the person who facilitates the business and who states the sense of the Meeting. A Meeting for Business may also have recording and reading clerks.

Concern - An interest deeply rooted in the Holy Spirit; one that can move both the individual and a Meeting to action.

Consensus - (secular term) A common opinion emerging from a group’s thinking together. (See Unity and Sense of The Meeting, preferred terms for Quaker usage.)

Continuing Revelation - The belief that God speaks to people directly today.

Convenor - Member of a committee, usually the first person listed, who is asked to convene the first meeting. Also the correspondent or contact person of a Worship Group.

Convinced Friend - A person who became a Friend as a result of being led to this decision by the Inner Light after careful study, thought, and inward seeking. (Used historically in distinction from Birthright Member.) In this Yearly Meeting the only kind of member.

Corporate - Descriptive of the physical and spiritual body of a Friends Meeting.

Discipline - (1.) Term related to discipleship - choosing to follow a particular path. (2.) The book of Faith and Practice of the Society of Friends. Each Yearly Meeting may draw together its own book of Discipline, so references are often made to the London Yearly Meeting Discipline or that of Philadelphia or other Yearly Meetings.

Eldering - Encouraging diffident or timid Friends to share their gifts with a Meeting, or discouraging and/or questioning an individual’s inappropriate behavior and expression of concerns. Historically—and in some Yearly Meetings still—“Elders” have been appointed to constitute the Committee on Ministry and Counsel or Ministry and Oversight.

Epistle - A formal letter sent by each Yearly Meeting to all Friends everywhere, stating the condition and experience of the Yearly Meeting.

Exercise - Profound exploration, by an individual or a group, of the implications of a concern.

Facing Benches - Historically, the seats in the front of the Meeting room, facing the body of the Meeting, on which Friends’ ministers and elders generally sat. In North Pacific Yearly Meeting the general practice is a circular or square arrangement that eliminates the facing bench distinction.

Gathered Meeting - An occasion when the Friends Meeting attains a perceptible sense of divine Presence, which touches the hearts of worshipers and unites them in a common experience of holy fellowship.

Good Order - The procedures for Friends business that have been found by experience to facilitate our corporate activities as we seek to find and carry out God’s will.
**Inner Light** - This refers to the presence of God in our hearts and lives, a reality which guides and directs us, which gives us strength to act on this guidance, and thus brings us into unity with the spirit of God. This presence of God within us is different from conscience, which is developed awareness of the merits or faults of our conduct, intentions, or character. Conscience is the sense of obligation to do right. Though both conscience and the Inner Light arise from within, they are not alternatives nor substitutes for each other. The “Inner Light” is also called the “Inward Light,” the “Light Within,” the “Christ Within,” the “Light of Christ,” or the “Holy Spirit.”

**Lay Down** - To terminate a committee or activity when its work is completed or no longer felt necessary.

**Leading** - An inner conviction that impels one to follow a certain course under a sense of divine guidance. A Friend may submit a leading to the Meeting for testing by corporate wisdom.

**Liberate** - To set concerned and qualified persons free for religious service such as traveling among Friends. This may include the Meeting’s taking over responsibilities of the concerned person while that person is away.

**Meeting For Sufferings** - A committee to support and care for members and their families who suffer because of their commitment to Friends principles. In England in recent years it refers to a representative committee which acts for London Yearly Meeting when it is not in session.

**Minding The Light** - Paying attention to the Inner Light.

**Minute** - A statement of an item of business approved by those in attendance at a given Meeting for Business.

**Minute of Travel** - See Travel Minute.

**Moved To Speak** - The feeling of being led by God to break the quiet of the Meeting with a verbal message.

**Opening** - See Proceed As Way Opens.

**Overseers** - Members of the Committee on Oversight, which has particular care of the membership and the corporate life of the Meeting.

**Plain Dress** - The simple and unadorned garments worn by early Friends.

**Plain Speech** - Friends’ use of “thee,” “thy,” “thine,” and both names with no titles as an expression of equality. Because the months and days were named for heathen gods, goddesses, and emperors, many Friends preferred to use “First day,” “Second day,” and “First Month,” “Second Month,” etc.

**Preparative Meeting** - (1) A body of Friends, generally under the care and guidance of an established Monthly Meeting, preparing to become a Monthly Meeting. (2.) Originally, and still in some Yearly Meetings, one of a group of Meetings that meet for worship and to “prepare” business to be brought before their Monthly Meeting.

**Programmed Meeting** - A Meeting for Worship, usually conducted by a pastor, with pre-arranged program including sermon, music, an offering, etc. In some programmed meetings periods of silence and meditation are provided during which Friends feel free to speak from the body of the Meeting.

**Proceed As Way Opens** - To act after waiting for guidance from God, avoiding hasty judgment or action, and moving ahead as circumstances allow.

**Quaker** - Unofficial name of a member of the Religious Society of Friends; originally derogatory.

**Queries** - The questions which, in conjunction with the advices, enable individuals and Meetings to examine themselves in relation to the standard of conduct which the Society of Friends has established for itself.

**Recording of Ministers** - The practice in some Yearly Meetings of listing members recognized as having the gift of ministry.

**Release** - See Liberate.

**Right Ordering** - Doing things according to good order. (See Good Order.)

**Seasoning** - Taking the time to seek the Light rather than moving into a matter hastily.

**Sense of the Meeting** - A collective understanding emerging from a Meeting for Business, gathered and explained by the clerk for the approval of the Meeting.

**Sojourning Member** - A Friend temporarily residing in the area of another Monthly Meeting, accepted by that Meeting as a participating member.
**Speak To One’s Condition** - Touch one at the deepest level, whether as a message directly from God, or through the words or actions of another person. Meet one’s need.

**Standing Aside** - The withdrawal of an objection by a member not able to unite with a proposed minute, enabling the Meeting to proceed.

**Standing In The Light** - A state of being guided by the Inner Light.

**State of the Society** - A report of the condition of a Monthly Meeting sent to the Quarterly Meeting and from the Quarterly Meeting to the Yearly Meeting. The Advices and Queries indicate the nature of the information on which such reports are based.

**Stop In The Mind** - An expression used by Friends when they feel uneasy and cannot follow a course of action.

**Testimony** - Public statement or witness based on beliefs of the Society of Friends which give direction to our lives.

**That of God In Everyone** - An expression derived from George Fox “answering to that of God in everyone.” (See Inner Light)

**Threshing Meeting** - A meeting held to discuss a controversial issue. At such a meeting all points of view are heard, but no decision is made.

**Travel Minute** - The endorsement a Meeting gives to one of its members who is traveling under the weight of a concern.

**Unity** - A recognition of the truth emerging from a group’s corporate search and yielding to the Holy Spirit in its decision - making.

**Unprogrammed Meeting** - A Meeting for Worship without pastor or prearranged program. Gathered Friends sit in silence, waiting upon God and “leadings of the Spirit” which may give rise to vocal messages to share with the Meeting. Meetings for Worship in which the whole time is spent in silence can also be occasions of great inspiration.

**Valiant Sixty** - (Actually 66) Fifty-four men and twelve women who went out to spread the Quaker message beginning about 1654.

**Visitation** - Formal visiting among Friends for anyone of several purposes.

**Waiting Upon The Lord** - Actively seeking and attending to God’s will in expectant worship.

**Weighty Friend** - Member who is recognized as having special experience and wisdom.

**Witness** - Used as a noun or as a verb. (1.) one who testifies to or shows evidence of religious beliefs and convictions. (2.) the words or actions of a person so testifying.

**Worldly** - Having to do with non-spiritual values. Originally referring to non-Quaker values.

**Worship Group** - A group convened to worship regularly after the manner of Friends.
The following selection of classic and recent Quaker publications is intended to serve as a starting point for individuals and Meetings who are in search of writings on Friends beliefs, practices, and history. More exhaustive bibliographies can be found in the *Historical Dictionary of the Friends* (Quakers) and Patricia Loring’s *Listening Spirituality*, listed among the books found below. It may be helpful to note that older publications may be reprinted by a variety of sources.

Useful addresses for obtaining Quaker literature include:

Quaker Books of Friends General Conference, 1216 Arch Street #2B, Philadelphia, PA 19107 or [www.quakerbooks.org](http://www.quakerbooks.org). This is the successor to Friends Book Store that served Philadelphia Yearly Meeting.

Pendle Hill Bookstore, 338 Plush Mill Road, Wallingford, PA 19086 or [www.pendlehill.org/index.php/bookstore](http://www.pendlehill.org/index.php/bookstore). Initially a publisher of pamphlets, the bookstore carries a full range of titles of interest to Friends.

Barclay Press, 211 N. Meridian St., #101, Newberg, OR 97132 or [www.barclaypress.com/bookstore](http://www.barclaypress.com/bookstore). A West Coast source for a number of titles that are of interest to Friends.

Vintage Quaker Books, 181 Hayden Rowe St., Hopkinton, MA 01748 or [www.vintagequakerbooks.com](http://www.vintagequakerbooks.com). Vintage is a source for out-of-print Quakeriana.

**General**

Abbott, Margery Post; Mary Ellen Chijioke; Pink Dandelion; John William Oliver Jr. *Historical Dictionary of the Friends (Quakers)*, The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 2003. A comprehensive volume useful for quick reference or as a beginning for further study; includes an extensive bibliography.


Barclay, Robert. *Apology for the True Christian Divinity*. Quaker Heritage Press, 2002. The original text in its seventeenth-century language. The *Apology* is described as “in many respects one of the most impressive theological writings of the [seventeenth] century.” in the *Dictionary of National Biography’s* article on Barclay.


Loring, Patricia. *Listening Spirituality*. Volume 2: Corporate Spiritual Practice Among Friends. Openings Press, 1999. The two volumes show a way to spiritual formation rooted in Quaker experience. They are clearly written and suggest numerous resources for exploration.


**Disciplines**


**History**


Hamm, Thomas D. *The Quakers in America*, Columbia University Press, 2003. According to the author’s preface, this scholarly study attempts to “describe and explain contemporary American Quakerism in its considerable diversity”.


Jones, Rufus. *Quakers in the American Colonies*, Macmillan, 1911. An account of the far-reaching influence of Friends in the colonial period and the decline that followed the American Revolution.


**Journals, Letters, and Biography**


Brinton, Howard:


Manousos, Anthony. *Howard and Anna Brinton: Re-inventors of Quakerism in the Twentieth Century: an Interpretive Biography*. QuakerBridge Media of Friends General Conference, 2013. The Brintons were a formative influence during the early years of what became the independent yearly meetings in the western United States.

Fell, Margaret:


Fell, Margaret. *Undaunted Zeal: The Letters of Margaret Fell*. Elsa F. Glines (ed.). Friends United Press, 2003. This is the first appearance of the letters from this pivotal figure in the beginning of Quakerism.

Kunze, Bonnelyn Young. *Margaret Fell and the Rise of Quakerism*. Stanford University Press, 1994. The author shows that in keeping with Margaret Fell’s status and personality, she was a co-leader with George Fox in the first fifty years of Quakerism.

Fox, George:


Ingle, H. Larry. *First Among Friends: George Fox & the Creation of Quakerism*. Oxford University Press, 1994. This volume brings George Fox vividly to life and shows the important part he played in establishing the Religious Society of Friends.

Fry, Elizabeth:


Woolman, John:


Plank, Geoffrey. *John Woolman's Path to the Peaceable Kingdom: A Quaker in the British Empire*. University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012. This biography brings forward Woolman's fidelity to Quaker discipline, his thoughts on work, commercial activity, and his understanding of the process of inspiration.


Worship and Devotion

Anon. *A Guide to True Peace or the Excellency of Inward and Spiritual Prayer*, 1813, frequently reprinted since. The 1946 Pendle Hill edition notes that this small book, compiled by two Friends from the writings of Fenelon, Guyon, and Molinos, has been widely used as a devotional book by members of the Society of Friends.


**Bibles & Bible Study**

*New Revised Standard Version* (NRSV). Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA. This is the version used throughout this NPYM Faith and Practice. It is a translation that adopted inclusive gender language.


Greenleaf-Murer, Esther. *Quaker Bible Index: An Index to Scripture References in the Works of Fox, Barclay, Penn, Woolman and Others.* Quaker Press of Friends General Conference, 2001. CD-ROM Disk. This is a tool for identifying Scripture passages of importance to early Friends and locating representative uses of them.

**Religious Education**


**Peace and Social Concerns**


Leuze, Robert (ed.). *Each of us Inevitable*. FLGBTQC, 2003. A compendium of addresses and essays on being gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, or an ally.


Other Publications of Interest


North Pacific Yearly Meeting Publications


Some Quaker Periodicals

Western Friend, 833 SE Main St Mailbox #138 Portland, OR 97214 or westernfriend.org. The official publication of Pacific, North Pacific, and Intermountain Yearly Meetings of the Religious Society of Friends.

Friends Journal, 1216 Arch Street, 2A, Philadelphia PA 19107-2835 or www.friendsjournal.org. The publication of record for many unprogrammed Friends.

Pendle Hill Pamphlets, Pendle Hill Publications, Wallingford, PA 19086 or www.pendlehill.org. Quaker faith and practice, the inward journey, social concerns, religion and psychology, literature, art, and biography have all been subjects in this series which issues five pamphlets a year.

Friends World News, Friends World Committee for Consultation, 1506 Race Street, Philadelphia, PA 19102 or www.fwccamericas.org. The purpose of the Friends World Committee for Consultation is to encourage fellowship among all the branches of the Religious Society of Friends.

Quaker History, Friends Historical Association, Haverford College, 370 Lancaster Avenue, Haverford, Pennsylvania, 19041 or www.haverford.edu/library/fha/welcome. Publishes articles on Quaker contributions to issues such as social justice, education and literature.

Quaker Religious Thought, Box 6042, George Fox University, 414 N. Meridian Street, Newberg, OR 97132. A journal with an academic cast sponsored by the Quaker Theological Discussion Group.

Quaker Theology, P.O. Box 1344, Fayetteville NC 28302. or www.quaker.org/quest. Describes itself as a progressive journal and forum for discussion and study; includes helpful book reviews.