1. practice re: minutes

Similar to what is described in the chapter, no consistent, formal numbering – depends on the recording secretary. If the minute is important we consider it at the same meeting. Otherwise when the minutes are approved at the next meeting.

2. Handling serious differences of opinion.

Our most serious issue has been becoming a monthly meeting. We held a retreat where the issue was discussed and objections were heard. We later held a threshing session where objections were heard. We formed an ad hoc committee to address the F&P queries re: readiness and tried to address in those the objections. There were two successive business meetings where the issue and objections were addressed, attended by our oversight committee from UFM, where we finally came to unity that we were ready.

3. Threshing sessions

See above. At the threshing session we did not come to a decision. Rather an ad hoc committee was formed to further address contentious issues. The threshing session section advising not to come to a decision in such sessions is useful. It is tempting to jump to a decision outside of business meeting when there appears to be agreement – more seasoning is always better.

4. Committees

We name our committees differently -and would like to see some language about the possibility of naming committees more in concert with what they do. (For example: instead of Ministry & Oversight, our committee is called Community Spiritual Life. Instead of Peace and Social Order/Concerns, our committee is called Faith in Action.) We object to the use of the word “oversight” in any committee name in the Religious Society of Friends because of its racial overtones and the sensitivity of attenders of color to that word. We never send a letter to our nonresident members and I can remember no instance of UFM doing so.

5. Quaker leadership

Encouraging support for the clerk and other officers is a good idea. Caution about “encouragement to accept leadership in faith and without fear.” Clerks who go beyond their leadings in “running” their committees can be a problem. If there is a paragraph on leadership, it has to be very carefully worded: leadership is a role of facilitating and listening closely for unity and the sense of the corporate body, rather than imposing a hierarchical structure or individual agenda. In turn, the Meeting should keep in mind that leaders are human and in most cases are doing their best; important to be tender with leaders and work in the spirit of mutual understanding and of faith.

6. Names of committees

See Response #4

7. Special challenges with membership

We have had an encounter with a mentally ill attender which continues to present us with challenges. It is important to remember that Meetings cannot provide therapy, nor can they override things like
civil protection orders or custody arrangements. It might be useful to include some language about helping with acute or chronic health problems of members and how best to support couples who are separating or going through divorce.

8. Clearness committees
Parker Palmer has outlined an elaborate clearness committee procedure – it seems too elaborate to me, but it might be useful to offer a few more guidelines than are presently included in the chapter.

9. Care committees
We have had support committees for both individuals in a marriage that was splitting up – this is a difficult thing as it is hard to avoid partisanship, although we generally managed to do that. We participated in a care committee for an attender with MS – providing counsel and meals to her and her husband over several years. We have now a support committee for an attender undergoing gender transition. Although the distinction might be subtle, we distinguish between care and support, not sure there is a big distinction though. It might be useful to include language about avoiding overburdening meeting’s resources with such committees and cautioning committees to set boundaries as to what they will and won’t do.

10. Descriptions of other committees Not necessary, though meetings should be careful to write out job descriptions for the committees so everyone knows what they have to do.

11. Define ministry
Our call to put the testimonies into action in accord with our measure of the Light

12. We have no experience with Friends in Ministry Work.

13. See #12.

14. Support committees – See #9

15. Children
We have a religious education committee, not a First Day school (FDS) committee; we do present lessons on a broad array of religious and faith practices

We generally have at least one other adult besides the teacher at each session of FDS; we get criminal background checks for our hired teachers; possibly we should caution everyone involved in FDS activities requiring that they report unseemly activities to the clerk/police?

We have members active in programs for kids who are no longer Central Friends. Recognizing milestones/ transitions is important we probably need to do more and it would be fine for Faith and Practice to include language about this.

The IMYM portion is a good edition.

16. The chapter with additions as noted and as edited looks pretty good.

17. See #16

18. The Bibliography contains almost all the publications I think would be useful. I would add Where Should I Stand? by Elizabeth Boardman, a useful guide for clerks of monthly meetings.