Port Townsend Friends Meeting

The Monthly Meeting: responses to questions

January 8, 2012

We thank the Faith and Practice Committee for all the work they have done to bring this chapter to us for review. Much of the document needs no changes. What follows are two sets of comments about the entire document and then some comments about certain sections of the document, some of which answer questions which the Discipline Committee asked.

proofreading: (this section is being sent to committee, we leave it to the committee to decide whether to post it so that others don’t go thru this same exercise…)

Page 2: 3rd paragraph, end of 2nd line “arid” should be “and”
Page 11: penultimate (next to last) paragraph, 4th line “at tenders” should be “attenders”
Page 18: penultimate paragraph 9th line: Quotation mark (“) that has no partner. Also, “they can be a treat help” (should this be great?)

(From here on, is being sent to committee for posting):

Capitalizing “Meeting”

Not sure if Meeting is capitalized consistently and it should be. (This is not something we were checking at the beginning.) On page 18, penultimate paragraph, 3rd line, should be Meeting committees (not capitalized there). We note that in the first paragraph of the document, there are 2 instances of meeting not being capitalized. We think they should be capitalized, as they refer to a Meeting for Worship and a Meeting which is an organized unit of the Society of Friends. And it was confusing to encounter meeting capitalized twice and not capitalized twice in the first paragraph…

Quotations:

When Faith and Practice was originally written, many woman Friend quotations were not very available. Many more are now available in the book, Hidden in Plain Sight. The Discipline Committee should have a copy of this book and be consulting it so that we can have a larger diversity of quote authors. 100% of the quotes offered are from men. That needs to be changed! We would especially recommend getting rid of the John Woolman quote (even though it’s so much fun doing the math), as the quote also refers to something outdated. Difficulties within the quote include “adjourning” a meeting and the use of “man” rather than “person.” We also recommend leaving out the definition of “adjourned Meeting” unless that term is actually being used somewhere in the Yearly Meeting.

Recording Clerk:

The Recording Clerk is a crucial part of all NPYM Monthly Meetings, but Faith and Practice seems to have lost giving a good description of the job and the duties. This position should be prioritized and much of the description of assistant clerk should be deleted. A few Meetings have assistant clerks, most don’t. (If the description is changed to include assistant clerks as rising clerks, then the old description
should be kept as well, since our Meeting sometimes has an assistant clerk who is available to clerk Meeting in the absence of the clerk, but is not a rising clerk.)

**Page 4: Under formulation of Minutes:**
Needs to say: “the minute is written down and read back to the Meeting by the Clerk or Recording Clerk” (not Assistant Clerk) or it will not reflect what our Meeting does.

**Page 7: 2nd paragraph (the one that starts “Organization…”) should say “a small Meeting may be able to function with only a Clerk and Recording Clerk and with the Meeting acting as a committee of the whole.” It seems likely that the Meeting would also need a Treasurer.

**Page 8, 7th paragraph:** In our Meeting, the Recording Clerk signs the minutes. The Clerk does not (although the clerk reviews the draft minutes before they are sent out). The Clerk signs other official papers.

Bottom of page 8 is the only mention in the entire chapter of a recording clerk. However, this is NOT a good description of the recording clerk’s job and seems to be mixed up with this concept of assistant clerk which we don’t use. The Recording Clerk should be the next officer listed after the Clerk and the description of this job should not be combined with any other officers. We would not ask the Recording Clerk to clerk a Meeting in the absence of the Clerk, since we would then need to find someone else to take the minutes. Taking the minutes is a very important job. These minutes need to accurately reflect what happened and to include items written according to Friends’ practice and jargon. Once approved, the minutes become part of the archival record of the Meeting and are referred to when looking for previous decisions of the Meeting. We also do not include names of Friends who spoke when discussing a decision, but say, “a Friend said…” Our Recording Clerk and our Records Clerk use BYM Handbook of Records (http://trilogy.brynmawr.edu/speccoll/bym/Handbook%20on%20Records3.htm) from Baltimore Yearly Meeting and we have linked to it online from the Port Townsend Friends Meeting website. (www.quaker.org/port-townsend) It would be great to refer to it in Faith and Practice and provide the link on the NPYM website. And the Discipline Committee would probably find many helpful descriptions there. Another thing that needs to be attended to is electronic records vs. hard copy records. Port Townsend Friends Meeting is keeping both.

**Friends’ Method of Reaching Decisions—Page 3 and following**
The document currently jumps from Unity to Serious Differences of Opinion. In between those two should be a discussion of “standing aside,” including being minuted as standing aside and the idea that once the decision has been made and people minuted as standing aside, the Meeting wholeheartedly supports the decision. (People don’t try to derail the decision.)

It might be good to put the section on threshing sessions ahead of the section on serious differences of opinion as well—as this discusses getting lots of opinions and what to do when the Meeting faces an issue with differences of opinion.

**State of the Society Report—Page 6**
This section does not accurately reflect practice. Several Meetings simply ask for a volunteer to write the report, which then comes to Ministry and Counsel and Business Meeting for approval. At Pacific Northwest Quarterly Meeting, the reports are posted, but not necessarily read and they are given to the QM Committee on M+O.

**Leadership (page 7)**

We agree that it would be useful to advise Friends to be tender with one another and especially toward those in leadership positions.

**Officers—Page 7ff**

The important officers are Clerk, Recording Clerk and Treasurer. We also have a Records Clerk/Archivist/Historian (called a Recorder on pg 9—not a term we have heard), and a Webkeeper. We recommend describing Clerk, Recording Clerk, Treasurer and Records Clerk and then mentioning that assistants can also be appointed if needed. It seems like an accountant would be found if the Treasurer needs assistance. If it is felt necessary to list Corresponding Clerk, that should be in a separate section, not combined with Recording Clerk.

In the description of Clerk, the clerk should *ask a past clerk or someone who seems skilled at clerking to clerk* the Meeting during a planned absence or when led to express an opinion on a controversial matter.

**Committees—Page 9ff**

Page 9 2nd paragraph under committees: We have seen several instances when a committee was laid down because people could not be found to serve on that committee and re-instituted when people were found. (The function of that committee was parceled out to other committees in the interim.)

**Page 10—Ministry and Counsel** is our preferred name for the “Ministry and Oversight” function and we have a Ministry and Counsel Committee. We prefer not to use the word oversight, which is reminiscent of the overseers who were managing the slaves in this country. We also think it unnecessary to put in the historical note saying that this term was used historically in a different manner.

**Care Committees** should definitely be included. Our Meeting has at least 6 care committees for members with needs. This is something which has grown up since Faith and Practice was written. (pg. 13)

**Citing other documents in Faith and Practice—Page 13**

It would be a good idea for Faith and Practice to cite the NPYM website and link to documents which are referenced in Faith and Practice, such as the New England YM document on Clearness Committees (and if that document is unavailable, find one that is, or quote the important parts in Faith and Practice).

**Released Friend—page 14**

We recommend using terms which are being used in NPYM. Released Friend: This terminology should be prioritized and included in the definitions and index, with Liberated Friend perhaps still mentioned if that term is used somewhere in NPYM. We are familiar with...
several instances of releasing Friends in different NPYM meetings; one Friend came to us asking to be released and said Faith and Practice did not describe this concept—a Friend who had read all of Faith and Practice found it for us under “Liberated Friend.”

We also recommend separating concerns from released Friend, or probably including a section defining concerns or mentioning them in the Friends Method of Reaching Decisions section—it is often someone or a committee bringing a concern that makes for memorable decision-making and sometimes carries the Meeting into a ministry without necessarily releasing one person to carry that ministry.

**Recorded Ministers**-page 15
We need to add that we do record ministers who feel called to do prison visiting.

**Traveling Minutes**
It is not our practice to forward a traveling minute for Presiding Clerk of YM endorsement when the person is traveling outside the YM.

**Children**–Page 17-We are anticipating that the children’s safety section will be at the end of this section.

**Youth** page 17-18
Somewhere in here we should talk about supporting youth to come together regionally, at Quarterly, Yearly, ski trip and possibly other times. It fits with page 18, 2nd paragraph comment about living up to their ideals and people of their own age group.