1. What is your group’s practice around formulation of minutes? ..... 
Decisions that are outside the lines of day-to-day business, statements of a specific stand or position, and when the meeting decides to take an action in the name of the meeting, are recorded as formal minutes.

We approve the wording of a formal minute in the business meeting at which the minute is approved. Such minutes are numbered with the date included in the numbering.

We keep a summary of committee reports and member concerns in the ‘business meeting minutes’, referring generally to the summary of business proceedings taken by the recording clerk. These are approved with corrections at the following business meeting.

2. What is your group’s practice and experience around handling serious difference of opinion?....
Standing aside and standing in the way are spelled out well, and do not need change.

See answers to question #16, regarding how to arrive at a ‘sense of the meeting’.

3. What is your group’s practice and experience with “threshing”? ....
Threshing sessions need to be strictly informational and not accusatory.

4. The section on Meeting officers and committees ..... 
The minimum requirement for small meeting operation should include clerk, treasurer, recording clerk, and an M&O committee. Our meeting operates on that basis. Other matters can be handled by ‘interest groups’, and we have only 3 formally scheduled business meetings per year. Matters that require meeting decisions in the interim periods are dealt with through pre-announced called meetings.

5. ..... support for Friends in leadership roles ..... 
It would be valuable for Multnomah Meeting “Care Committee” (for Margery Abbott) to share how they approached support for Margery.

A few of us here have been ‘pushed’ into leadership positions in a number of Friends groups, and been grateful for the otherwise avoided ‘opportunity’.

A leadership class might be a valuable addition, e.g. as a workshop at Yearly meeting.

6. “Committee on Worship and Ministry” and “Committee on Oversight” .....  
What is your preferred name for the committee(s) carrying out these functions?
“Ministry and Oversight” seemed most appropriate to our case, where the functions of two committees are combined into a single committee.

7. .....Special Challenges in Oversight and Pastoral Care......What is your group’s experience...? 
Anti-harassment is a difficult issue, when the Meeting tries to deal with alleged harassment involving two people who are both members or attenders (a couple splitting up, for instance), and
Meeting being asked in effect to choose between them. The Meeting finds itself in an impossible situation. Few Meetings have the resources to deal effectively with such situations.

A person with a criminal history or a history of sexual offense should be given a chance to come to terms with his or her past with the help of the Meeting. But the extent that a Meeting can be of help is very limited. A Meeting cannot function as a personal therapist. One approach would be to give the person a chance to talk openly about his or her past and how he or she thinks joining with the Meeting could help bring about a change for the better. This would have to be an ongoing process – i.e., a heavy charge to lay on any Committee on Oversight. Small Meetings would have to consider whether they have the resources available. There are, however, other important and practical considerations; it is best for the Meeting if sexual offenders are made known, so there can be appropriate monitoring for the safety of children in the meeting. And, Meeting must be sensitive to the needs of adults in the meeting who might have been abused as children.

In the past we had long discussions around acceptance of gay issues, including same sex marriage, and minuted our support for same sex marriage. However, on one occasion there was a feeling on the part of some that the meeting had spent too much energy and time discussing the issue. On another occasion a Gay friend wanted the meeting to endorse an aggressively worded statement, and the meeting refused to accept that set of words.

Our meeting has members and family members with varying degrees of mental illness. We try to be supportive, although it is not always clear how to be meaningfully supportive. Mental illness is a matter of degree; we all have some tendency toward some degree of mental illness. As a Meeting, we should continue to be tolerant and accepting to the extent possible. But, it should be emphasized that disruptive behavior during meeting for worship cannot be tolerated.

Do you have guidelines, procedures, policies you could share?

no

8. Is the description of Clearness Committees ...adequate, or ... include more detail ....?
Clearness Committees are an important element of Monthly Meeting proper functioning, and deserve both a full explanation, guidelines and examples of use.

The New England Yearly Meeting referenced document is a good explanation, and should be used in part to provide guidelines on formation, operation and expectations of Clearness Committees. Other parts of the referenced document could form an appendix section with examples.

There should also be a statement in the introduction to Clearness Committees, regarding why this approach is in keeping with the practices and beliefs of the Religious Society of Friends.

9. What is your group’s practice and experience with Care Committees?
Ten years ago the meeting came together as a Care Committee of the whole, although we didn’t put that name to it, to provide support for a member who was terminally ill. The meeting provided physical assistance in the form of transportation, shopping and meals, and emotional support through visitation. Many meeting members participated, and one new attender had time available to provide much-needed live-in assistance. This was a moving and unifying experience for the meeting.

10. ..... include descriptions of other typical committees and their responsibilities and functions?
Yes, a list of typical committees and a general description of how committees work should be included. This should include the recommendations that committees bring proposals about
intended operation and actions to monthly meeting for approval, or as a check-in process to keep the meeting apprised of their activities, and committees should hold their business meetings in the manner of Friends Meeting for Business. [This recommendation is also part of our response to question #16, regarding an operations manual.]

As indicated earlier, Clearness Committees are of sufficient importance, they require a full description regarding their use, formation and guidelines for proper operation.

11. .....ministry.  How would you define it?
There are many forms of ministry: “spoken ministry”, attentive/responsive caring, counseling. We are all ministers to each other.

An useful exercise for every Meeting is to have each member/attender define their own gifts, and how to apply them for the greater good. This leads directly to ‘ministry’ possibilities.

12. What is your group’s practice and experience with Friends in Ministry Work.....?
Presently, PMMM has no practice regarding Friends in Ministry. In the 1970’s one of our members felt a calling to do prison ministry, and the Meeting minuted its approval. A member counseled conscientious objectors during the Viet Nam war.

13. .....a tension arising: we want to acknowledge and support members doing “ministry work” in their professional lives but we do not acknowledge and support members doing “ministry work” within our meetings and within the Society. ..... Multnomah Meeting and Reedwood Friends supported the ministry of Margery Post Abbott. It would be valuable to know what was done, and how it was carried out, as an example of supporting members doing ministry work within their meetings and the Society. Another example can be drawn from Intermountain Yearly Meeting and the work camps led by Mike Gray; these included water projects and home building for Indians in the southwest U.S. and Mexico.

Meetings should acknowledge and support the gifts of their members and attenders.

14. What is your group’s practice and experience with Support Committees?
PMMM has not had any recent ‘official’ support committee, however, unofficial support groups have been formed, as needed.

15. .....concerning children, ..... borrowing and adapting some material from Intermountain Yearly Meeting’s Faith and Practice..... Is it suitable?
Yes, the IMYM material is suitable. Regarding child safety, although the benefit of at least two adults is clear, a young person is more inclined to state their problems to a single adult.

Is there anything that NPYM Friends would add, subtract, alter?
Any child born into a Meeting is a “Junior Friend”, and holds “Junior Membership” [NPYM F&P page 61]. There might be a better name for this, which is less likely to be confused with the children of an age group, and which clarifies the true relationship of the child to the meeting.

It is very important to record these children in the Meeting records, as having some form of recognized inclusion in the Society, such as “children under the care of the meeting”. This can be to their benefit in later years, for instance if they become conscientious objectors.

It is important that children understand the distinction between being “under the care of the meeting”, which was a choice their parents made on their behalf, and being a member, which is a
very personal decision they make for themselves. We think that during the middle school years is the time to include an exploration of this distinction.

When a child nears adulthood, they should be offered a clearness committee to consider whether they are ready to (and desire to) assume regular membership. This should be their conscious decision, and not a de facto advancement.

16. What’s missing ....?  
A section should be added (in the appropriate place – likely not under Mtg for Business) that provides guidelines on dealing with conflict among members; how do we deal with interpersonal hurts/conflicts as a community, which are especially noticeable and painful in very small meetings.

Since the majority of monthly meetings in NPYM are small to mid-sized, there could be more suggestions and examples on the operation of small meetings. A more encompassing ‘operation manual’ would be useful, with the understanding that meeting size will dictate what is applicable. The manual would include descriptions of typical committees and organizational structures, job descriptions (or reference to NPYM web site job descriptions), activities and their calendar timings required for monthly, quarterly and yearly meetings, and procedural guidelines [such as those recommended in response to question 10].

A new subsection should be included to fully amplify the importance of “Sense of the Meeting”: what does it mean, how is it determined, how does it occur when there are those who stand against a meeting proposal? Arriving at a sense of the meeting does not imply unity or consensus; it is subtle. Striving to arrive at a true sense of the meeting is a basic principal of Friends Meeting for Business, and articulating the sense of the meeting is the clerk’s primary responsibility. This may require ‘seasoning’ a response, and might even require ‘threshing sessions’.

17. Are there parts .....that ......belong better in some other part of the Faith & Practice? 
If the new F&P is very well indexed the location of parts is less critical – because the content may be found by consulting the index. PMMM has a member who is starting a business as a professional indexer. And, we believe there are one or two other members in NPYM who also possess the required skills. We believe that a good index is important to the accessibility of the material.

18. What books, pamphlets, articles, or other resources can you recommend ....?  
“Where Should I Stand?” A Field Guide For Monthly Meeting Clerks – by Elizabeth Boardman