Jonathan Brown's comments on the SSFM revised monthly meeting chapter

p.8 Heading and paragraph re Corresponding Clerk.
Is this practice still in active use? I have not heard of it. If not, let's drop it.

p.9 "Meetings customarily appoint experienced and capable members and attenders of the Society of Friends to the Committee on Worship and Ministry, the Committee on Oversight, the Nominating Committee, and clerks of most committees."

I am not in unity with the addition of the words "and attenders." Now that we are a Monthly Meeting, I trust our practice will be in accordance with the typical practice of appointing only members to CSL, Nominating, and as clerks of committees and officers of the Meeting.

p.10 "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, ..."

I suggest adding the words "pastoral care of" before "the members."

p.10 "Members of this committee strengthen Meeting for Worship by setting an example, demonstrating promptness and reverence in their approach to the Meeting for Worship, ..."

I feel strongly that we should add the words "attending regularly," between "by" and "setting."

p.11 "This committee, often in cooperation with the Meeting Recorder, is responsible for preparing annually a list of Meeting members and attenders.

I suggest: "This committee, often in cooperation with the Assistant Clerk, Recording Clerk, or Archivist, is responsible for ..."

p.12 "Special Challenges in Oversight and Pastoral Care"
Please add: "Conflict between members of the Meeting, especially in regard to business of the Meeting." I would like to see some advice on this added to F&P.

Another possible topic is "confidentiality and privacy." Personally I think we overdo it, but in any case it might be helpful to have some guidelines.

p.12 "Clearness Committees"
I've never heard them referred to as "a Committee of Concern." I suggest dropping this.

p.13 "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."

UFM doesn't do this. Does anyone? I suggest that the first two sentences of this paragraph are sufficient.

p.17 "Friends need to be aware that we are just as susceptible as any other group--despite our self-image as peaceful people striving for good--to danger toward our children..."

I think the aside (between the em-dashes) fatally undermines the flow of this sentence. I would be inclined to drop the aside entirely. Alternatively, it should be moved to the beginning or end.

p.18 re Youth
Are sex, drugs, and alcohol covered somewhere else? If so, perhaps a cross-reference here would be appropriate.

Thanks!
Jonathan
Lorna Stone comments on South Seattle Friends revised monthly meeting chapter

1. (Page 7) Under the heading “Meeting Officers and Committees” – leave out the last paragraph of bracketed Questions – why provide special or additional support for leaders? All of us may need support at some time or another, singling out leaders is not appropriate. Also, leaders usually are quite capable of marshaling (sorry about use of military term) support when they need it.

2. (Page 10) Under “Committee on Worship and Ministry; Committee on Oversight” - eliminate footnote – all of this should be in the text of the document. Footnotes make reading difficult and create a tendency away from simplicity and clarity of expression.

3. (Page 11) Under “Concern for Oversight” the heading should be “Concern for Oversight/Counsel/ Pastoral Care” or in some way made clear what “Oversight” really means or includes.

4. (Page 11-13) Under “Pastoral Care of Members”:
1st paragraph – eliminate “from those who may be holding back through shyness or a sense of unworthiness.” (who knows why someone has not applied for membership?).
1st paragraph – eliminate “Sometimes, people….personal difficulties.” This is better included in the chapter on Membership – it is extraneous here.
2nd paragraph to the end of the section on “Committee on Worship and Ministry; Committee on Oversight” seems confusing. Beginning with “Particular responsibility for care and spiritual counseling, it appears that the section is discussing “Care/Support committees” which should be clearly named, as are “Clearness committees” Where do “Care/Support committees fit in?

John Kaiser’s comments on the monthly meeting chapter

[[QUESTIONS FOR NPYM FRIENDS: The Committee on the Discipline has heard from Friends that our Faith and Practice should include more material about support for Friends in ministry work such as chaplaincy, counseling, and spiritual direction. The Committee now senses 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. It's not within the Committee's scope to suggest changes in NPYM practice; it is within our scope to point out possible inconsistencies and encourage discussion. What do you think?]]

Leave your ministry at the door cf: http://newquakervoices.org/?p=279

I couldn’t help but be bemused by the current proposed changes to Faith and Practice, the booklet intended to convey contemporary interpretations of what it means to live one’s faith as a Quaker (in this instance as practiced in the North Pacific Yearly Meeting).

First of all, as many are doubtless aware, Quakers in unprogrammed worship do not have a minister. Instead everyone ministers to each other, at least in theory. We believe in equality and the presence of God in each person. But as Orwell noted, some are more equal than others. Some people are better at ministry than others. And a few are so good at practices associated with ministry — listening, empathy, compassion, support, and perhaps even an understanding of scripture and myth — that it now appears they’re being asked to stop.

As stated in the excerpt above, “we do not acknowledge and support members doing ‘ministry work’ within our meetings and within the Society.” What constitutes ministry work is left undefined and undeveloped. Perhaps the committee would like to elaborate further.

Equally troubling is the apparent indifference implicit in the phrase “we do not acknowledge and support.” It suggests a core group of decidedly secular individuals in the Meeting who would rather pretend that such people do not exist. It seems to reflect a dysfunction of those who would seemingly prefer passive aggression over recognizing that of God in everyone.
The words from the committee do at least provide a form of amusement, however slight, during an otherwise uneventful Friday evening. And the name of the group, the so-called “Committee on the Discipline” seems like it would be difficult to say out loud with a straight face. It’s not quite as antiquated as the name “Meeting for Sufferings”, still present in British Yearly Meeting despite calls for its retirement. Perhaps the pair go hand in hand and we would be better off if both were left to history instead.