

# Worship & Ministry Committee Handbook

Silence is the inaudible echo of the voices of God which is heard with the ears of the heart. It is not simply the absence of speech but a state of being. It is a universal language that speaks and comprehends all, contains all languages and all accents, tolerates and absorbs all. The paradox of the silence is that one can never say enough about it since it is inexhaustible by its very nature.

The silence of a wise person is not the same silence as that of a beginner. In other words, there is an ignorant silence as there is a knowing silence, and finally there is the silence of the dead who have merged with the infinite. Many of those who are not present with us anymore have left some of their silence with us.

Silence can spill over into our speech as our utterances can spill over into the silence. When the silence penetrates the words with its own quality it enhances them, but when words spill into the silence they may diminish it unless they are truly inspired and give it new meaning the moment they are uttered...

Silence enables us to escape the prison of words. As long as we respect it we can neither err nor offend. The implicit message in meeting is our silent presence, the explicit is our verbal statements. Silence creates its own tensions, it fluctuates like waves; after every high there is a low, even soft murmurs as its waves dissipate toward the shore. You may step into the pool of silence denuded and in pain, but you will emerge from it restored in truth and peace – *Peter and Carole Fingesten, 1987*

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## Meeting For Worship

[Faith & Practice 2001, pp. 25-30]

*And it is especially to be observed, that in the whole New Testament there is no order nor command given in this thing, but to follow the revelation of the Spirit, save only that general one of meeting together; a thing dearly owned and diligently practised by us...*

Robert Barclay, *Apology*, 1676, 11:10

Worship is the response of the human spirit to the call of the Divine. Friends seek communion with that of God within, which some Friends call the Living Christ, the Teacher with whom each one has a relationship. Corporate worship deepens our sense of the Presence and our connection to it. In worship at its best, we transcend ourselves: *“Every individual man and woman” is brought “to the Spirit of God...and Truth in their own hearts, [to] love one another and love enemies”*

George Fox, *The Power of the Lord Is Over All*, 1668, p. 235)

The Meeting for Worship is at the core of Quaker practice. There, Friends gather together in expectant silence, waiting upon God. Typically, Meeting for Worship begins when the first worshipers settle into the silence at the appointed place and time. It ends when the Clerk or another designated individual shakes the hand of another person seated nearby. At that signal, Friends generally shake hands and greet each other.

Meeting for Worship is different from solitary prayer. The strength and focus of the community draw one who is distracted back toward the Center. In the embrace of the Meeting, an individual may be more willing to be searched by the Light that exposes weaknesses and shortcomings, and challenges the worshiper to transformation. Together, we can more clearly see Truth; we can better receive and understand continuing revelation. William Penn’s query captures this spirit in the language of his time:

*When you come to your meetings...do you sit down in 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 in 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, *a tender visitation*, works, 1771, p. 441

Thus conducting worship under the leading of Divine Will, Friends assemble in the silence without prearranged program. Each tries to still the inward clamor of personal anxieties and ambitions, listening for the voice of the Inner Guide, endeavoring to be faithful to its instruction. Such faithfulness may require an outward silence. It may require one to rise and speak words that do not come easily, which may not be fully understood, or which may be uncomfortable. It may require action, or restraint of action, by some individual or the whole Meeting, outside the Meeting for Worship.

During worship, all share responsibility for vocal ministry. God may call upon any one, regardless of experience or education, age or gender, to be a messenger. No one is excluded from the possibility of such service just as no one is appointed in advance to preach or pray at a particular Meeting for Worship. When someone does offer vocal ministry, Friends seek to be open, notwithstanding any hesitations or imperfection in the

speaker's words. An unexpected message may touch hearts, reveal the wisdom from the Source, and encourage the growth of the Seed within.

During Meeting for Worship, Friends seek connection to one another and to God dwelling among them. In some Meetings, the vocal ministry will have a common theme, each message deepening and enriching the other, and connecting to one's own thoughts. Some Meetings are entirely silent. At a gathered Meeting, "the sense is present that a new Life and Power has entered our midst" (Thomas Kelly, *The Gathered Meeting*). Not every Meeting is a gathered Meeting, and not everyone has the same perception of a particular Meeting.

*The meeting comes to be truly gathered when most, if not all, of those present have themselves been drawn in to the depths of themselves so that even their thoughts have been stilled and their minds, while by no means empty, are in near perfect rest.*

George Gorman, *The Amazing Fact of Quaker Worship*, 1986, p. 4

In nurturing its worship, a Meeting that is experiencing an extended period of arid silence might try to encourage those who are reluctant to speak to be faithful to the call when it comes. Another Meeting, where many vocal messages have come from speakers with questionable discernment, may seek to encourage a greater spiritual depth in both the silence and the words. Seeking what George Fox referred to as the "universal, true, and perfect worship," Friends return in faith to God for guidance.

*All of us, with our unveiled faces like mirrors reflecting the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the image that we reflect in brighter and brighter glory; this is the working of the Lord who is the Spirit.* 2 Corinthians 3:18 The New Jerusalem Bible

### Preparation for and Participation in Worship

Friends who thoughtfully prepare to come together with clear minds and open hearts enhance the depth and quality of Meetings for Worship and for Business. Preparation may include regular prayer and worship, the reading of Scripture and other devotional literature, reflection, and other ways of experiencing God's presence. The quality of each person's participation affects the entire community. Regular and punctual attendance is helpful, as are attentive listening to the vocal ministry of others and the exercise of careful discernment in offering vocal ministry. Genuine preparation includes knowing others in the Meeting, being of service, and through words, actions and attitudes, honoring covenant relationships with one another and with the Living God.

### Prayer and other Reflective Practices

Prayer outside of Meeting for Worship takes many forms. For some, constant awareness of the Presence is the background to everything else that happens. For others, prayer is a change from one's usual focus to communicate with the Divine at a particular moment. Prayer may be of a traditional type, such as intercession or praise in the form of beloved words written by another. A prayer may be vocalized, alone or in a group. It may be

silent: formed of internal words or deep and wordless. Prayer may include an embodied discipline, like chant or a movement meditation.

Daily prayer is a discipline that sustains the spirit and prepares for the coming Meeting for Worship. The Meeting community is greatly strengthened when its members regularly pray for it and for one another.

*There is no use trying to conceal how difficult it is to find time for private prayer in the congested schedules under which most modern people live. But at the bottom it is not a question of finding time...[but] of the depth of the sense of need and of the desire. Busy lovers find time to write letters to one another, often...long letters; although what really matters is not the length of the letter any more than it is the length of the prayer. In this life we find the time for what we believe to be important.*

Douglas Steere, 1938, Britain Yearly Meeting, *Quaker Faith & Practice*, 1995, §2.32

Study of Judeo-Christian scriptures, Quaker materials, devotional literature, and other inspiring works can deepen understanding and enliven spiritual imagination. Individual reflection, conversations with a spiritual friend, group discussions, small gatherings for worship during the week, retreats, and pursuit of opportunities for religious education enhance spiritual development and readiness to be faithful instruments of God's will.

### Vocal Ministry and Faithful Listening

Just as careful preparation enhances the quality of worship, so too does attention to the Light during worship. Friends come to worship to receive and to give, to speak when led, to be silent when that is what obedience requires. Vocal ministry is a vital part of the Meeting for Worship. It is a form of service in which a person stands to share a message from God delivered through the individual. Friends hope that all spoken messages during worship are in fact vocal ministry. The responsibility rests on each member of the group to be ready and willing to offer such ministry when called to do so.

As one sits in silence, a message may arise out of the depth of the soul that seems intended not simply for the worshiper, but for the gathering as a whole. Some Friends feel burdened with a sense of omission if a message is not expressed, but once it is faithfully uttered, a sense of inward peace may follow. Experience in Meeting helps to discriminate between private words and those that arise as true leadings of the Spirit that should not be silenced. An inclination to share a message may arise in advance of Meeting, but the decision to speak should await a clear leading at the time. With practice, a person may learn to discern a call clearly, though many are quite unable to describe its quality.

Some worshipers called to speak feel an internal or external quaking, deep emotion, tears, an increased heart rate, or other agitation. Some have felt grabbed by the hand of God and held until after delivering the message. One person feels a profound stillness accompanied by a clear voice that is not her own. Another may find himself suddenly standing, and then wait, praying silently for guidance, before beginning to speak. Still

another may test a message by repeatedly pushing it ‘out of mind’ only to find that it returns again and again.

As one is weighing whether to speak, certain questions may be helpful: Is this message Spirit-led, or merely emotionally compelling? Is this message intended for this group, or is it only for me? Is it better saved until another time or place? When the call to speak is clear, the worshiper should stand if possible. He or she should speak simply, briefly, audibly, and from personal spiritual experience. Occasionally, ministry may take the form of singing or of standing silently. Neither debate, nor discussion with previous speakers, is ever appropriate, and speaking twice during a single Meeting for Worship is very seldom so.

Those who are led to speak have different backgrounds, verbal skills and interpretive power. Friends try to listen more than they speak, keep an open heart, seek the Spirit behind the words and hold the speaker in love. Listeners may find it helpful to pray that the messenger is faithful to the call, and that God’s word will emerge through the medium of human speech. A message that does not speak to one person’s needs may be helpful to another. After a message has been given, it is important to allow time to ponder its meaning, letting the Spirit move through the assembly of Friends before another ministers.

## Meeting For Worship For Business

[Faith & Practice 2001, pp. 31-33]

*Being orderly come together... proceed in the wisdom of God, not in the way of the world... not deciding affairs by the greater vote... [but by] assenting together as one man in the spirit of truth and equity, and by the authority thereof.*

Edward Burrough, 1662, Britain Yearly Meeting, Quaker Faith & Practice, 1995, §2.87

There is little record of how Friends’ unique practice for conducting business evolved, but there can be no doubt that it is derived directly from Friends’ faith. It is guided by three core beliefs: that there is that of God in everyone, that each can experience that of God within, and that divine guidance will lead to the realization of a single shared truth. From these beliefs it readily follows that a Friends Meeting for Business is a Meeting for Worship in which business is conducted by seeking God’s will in the decisions that are to be made. The silent worship with which the Meeting for Business both opens and closes connects individuals to the Spirit. It prompts them to be sensitive to and grounded in the Love that binds the Meeting.

Anyone may call for silence in the course of a meeting: when resolution of a matter is proving difficult, when there is a need to reflect on what has been said, or to return the Meeting to a spirit of quiet reverence. A call for silence is always a call to worship, to focus on the guidance of the Spirit, to listen with a loving and open heart. As in other Meetings for Worship, Friends may feel moved to speak out of the silence on the matter in hand.

Friends strive to observe a discipline of plain speaking, expressing themselves simply and directly. This discipline extends to not interrupting or interjecting remarks. The occasional “That Friend speaks my mind” shows support for a viewpoint. Friends maintain order and ensure full participation by waiting to be recognized by the Clerk and usually standing to speak, addressing all comments to the Clerk and not to one another. Although Friends study and discuss issues in advance, they should not come to Meeting for Business with minds made up. Seeking to be reverent to that of God in themselves and others, Friends should offer their personal perspectives and avoid taking fixed or adversarial positions.

Friends pay careful attention to all expressions, searching for the truth behind the words, aware that it may come from unexpected places. However, the voice of an experienced Friend is often especially valuable, providing wisdom that the Meeting needs.

Listening is at the very heart of Friends’ faith and practice. By listening to the Divine in ourselves and in each other, Friends are better prepared to find God’s will. Friends should not listen for the most convincing argument, but for the greater understanding to which each contributes and to which each may assent. A sense of the Meeting evolves from the interplay of all contributions and the skilled guidance of the Clerk. When unity is realized, the outcome is deeply satisfying. It produces a sense of the rightness of the decision and a loving connection between members.

Friends do not vote or act on the will of the majority. In Quaker experience, it is possible for all to unite in a decision, even when some have reservations. A united Meeting is not necessarily of one mind but it is all of one heart.

Unity requires active participation: where there is division over an issue, it is especially important for everybody to be heard. When Friends withhold expressions of dissent in the interest of avoiding controversy, the unity that results is spurious. The collective wisdom of the Meeting can be realized only to the extent that all participate in seeking it.

When Friends come to an issue with conflicting views, they are challenged to pool their knowledge and experience, and to experience the joy of discovering a new understanding that encompasses all of these elements in a far better form than previously imagined. This process requires love, courage, trust, and an ability to truly listen and change.

In coming to unity, Friends draw upon feelings and contemplative insight, not simply upon rational thought. Honest emotions are essential to discernment, but they should not be abused to sway the Meeting’s decision. Time is also essential for “seasoning” important decisions. Sometimes decisions must be deferred for reflection and to allow residual unease to surface.

Decisions made in unity are not victories or defeats when Friends remain faithful, preserving the loving unity and higher purpose of the Meeting. Business conducted as a corporate endeavor in a Meeting for Worship enables Friends to move forward with confidence and joy. (See Friends Process for Making Decisions, p. 129).

## The Meeting Community

[Faith & Practice 2001, pp. 33-37]

*I do not think I am alone in my certainty that it's in my relationships with people that the deepest religious truths are most vividly disclosed.*

George Gorman, Religion and Life, 1982,  
Britain Yearly Meeting, Quaker Faith & Practice, 1995, §10.20

The Religious Society of Friends arose as a community of the Spirit, centered in regular, shared worship. Ostracized and attacked by mainstream English society, Quakers developed a loving social community which, while not immune to struggle and conflict, supported their personal growth, their care for one another, and their work in the larger world.

Now as then, community is essential to Friends' life and spiritual growth. A strong Meeting community offers companionship, resources to care lovingly for those in need, and a place to test and support leadings and concerns. Community is expressed in many ways: by cheerfully joining together to accomplish the work of the Meeting, refraining from gossip and disparaging others, taking part in clearness committees, providing pastoral care, and reflecting Friends values in the larger society. Community is also expressed in commemorative, sociable and playful activities of the Monthly Meeting.

Those who belong to a Meeting community receive its loving care. Each one in turn should attend to the spiritual condition of others. While respecting others' privacy, Friends must be sensitive to one another's needs and willing to ask for assistance in times of trouble. Conflict and difference are a part of life, a necessary result of the varying needs, aims, and perspectives of individuals and communities. Bringing them into the open is a necessary step towards empathy, understanding, and healing. Individuals and Meetings need to address conflict promptly in a spirit of goodwill and a desire to maintain loving relationship. When resolution is not immediate, the Meeting waits for way to open, while persisting in an earnest search for unity.

Recognizing the universal human needs for embrace, intimacy and sharing, as well as solitude, Friends support each other as individuals, couples, and families, however constructed or defined. The Meeting strives to be present for all its members throughout different stages of their lives and their specific needs — as single people, coupled, or in broader communities — recognizing the Divine in each. The Meeting can be an instrument of “divine assistance,” not only in supporting the marriages under its care, but also in supporting single people and all forms of partnership. We all have need for solitude as well as companionship, though these needs differ and are not always arrived at by choice. The Meeting Community plays a vital role in being sensitive to the needs and changing circumstances of its members.

Families are built on faith and love, not simply legal definitions. Friends experience the joys and struggles of being loving and faithful within families of choice and families of origin. Sharing life with those who matter most to us is a deeply spiritual journey when

we struggle to live lives of openness and integrity. To be companions to each other on this common journey is central to the meaning of community.

Children bring special blessings to the Meeting community. Meetings must learn to cultivate the spiritual gifts of their youngest members, to listen to them and learn from them.

*Jesus said: Let the children come to me, and do not hinder them; for such belongs to the kingdom of God. Truly I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it.*

Luke 18:16-17

As Meetings open themselves to the lessons children offer, they must also be attentive to families experiencing the joys and stresses of child rearing. Parents provide for the healthy development of their children's minds, bodies, and spirits. Time and attention needed for this central task should be shielded from less important tasks. Meetings should share these responsibilities with parents and extended families so that children grow in the knowledge that they occupy a valuable place in the Meeting community. All adults in the Meeting should find ways to be involved in the children's lives.

At the same time Friends cherish older people in the Meeting, offering support as they face changing circumstances in their lives, valuing the wisdom, serenity and detachment that advancing age may bring. With gratitude for the memories and blessings of those lives, Friends value older people in new ways as they pass on their responsibilities, assuring them of their continuing role in the Meeting community. Aging members can be bearers of wisdom, a tranquil enlightenment that recognizes the divine presence in the ordinary, as well as prophecy, which calls us out of the ordinary to a new vision of the world.

The Meeting must find ways to consult its experienced members as it makes decisions. It may ease its expectations of members who no longer find it easy to bring a pot luck dish, or volunteer to do clean up, but whose company it cherishes.

At the same time the Meeting must accompany all members as they experience transitions, change, diminishment of all kinds. These changes present constant challenges: physical, financial and spiritual. The life of the community can deepen and grow in the process of confronting change.

The Quaker community extends beyond our home Meetings. Historically, Friends have maintained contact with the wider world of Quakers through traveling ministry, intervisitation, home hospitality, and participation in the wider gatherings of Friends. Such participation often results in a deepening of individual commitments and a livelier sense of community at the home Meeting.

Friends seek to embrace all people — all God's children — in community. This witness for, and practice of, community informs social concerns for peace and justice in the world.

When Friends are led to actions in the wider world, the Meeting may be called upon not only to help discern the merits of such a leading but also to offer material and spiritual support. (See Clearness and Clearness Committees, p. 139). Early Meetings were both a religious body and an economic unit, coming to the aid of persecuted members who risked imprisonment and loss of jobs and property for acting on their beliefs. Meetings that have united on a course of action, such as providing sanctuary to families fleeing oppression, have often found their faith deepened and their community life enhanced. Such actions require full participation, which is the essence of community.

Advices and Queries:  
Meeting for Worship, Spiritual Life, and Meeting for Business  
[Faith & Practice 2001, pp. 46-49]

Quaker Faith & Practice: Advices and Queries

Friends are committed to a way of worship that allows God continually to teach and transform us. The Advices and Queries remind us of the essential faith and principles of the Religious Society of Friends. They challenge and inspire us in our personal lives and in our corporate life. If the ideal of Christian discipleship seems impossibly demanding, and we become disheartened at times, we should remember that we seek it not with our own strength, but with the strength of the Light within.

The Advices and Queries are intended for use in Monthly Meetings as well as for personal devotions. Some Meetings read one section each month, during Meeting for Business or at other times, or publish them in Meeting newsletters. They may be used as a basis for annual reports on the State of the Meeting. Committees may find certain queries helpful in evaluating their activities.

As we speak to what we know to be true in our lives and listen to each other in humility and understanding, we trust in the Spirit that transcends our human effort and comprehension. So these Advices and Queries are offered for the comfort and discomfort of Friends, with the hope that we may be more faithful and find deeper joy in God's service.

Meeting for Worship

The heart of the Religious Society of Friends is the Meeting for Worship. In direct communion with God, we offer ourselves for God's will. Our daily lives are linked with the Meeting for Worship, the Meeting for Worship with our daily lives.

Come regularly to Meeting for Worship, even when you are angry, tired, or spiritually cold. Bring your joys and your hurts, and the needs of other people. Accept and support each other in the community where God dwells among us. As you do so, you may find the grace of prayer.

At times the Spirit may prompt you to speak in Meeting. Wait patiently to know that the sense and the time are right. When you are sure, have confidence that the words will be given to you. Listen to the ministry of others with an open spirit. If it is not God's word for you, it may be for others. After a message has been given, allow time to ponder its meaning and to let the Meeting return to silent worship. In speech and in silence, each person contributes to the Meeting.

Do I come to Meeting with heart and mind prepared for worship?

In both silent and vocal ministry, do I respond to the leadings of the Holy Spirit, without pre-arrangement and in simplicity and truth?

Am I careful not to speak at undue length or beyond personal spiritual experience?

*Do we meet in expectant waiting for the promptings of the Divine Spirit?*

*Are we drawn together in a living silence by the power of God in our midst?*

### Spiritual Life

The life of the spirit gains depth and vigor through devotional practices, prayer, study and meditation. Take time regularly for individual and family worship, discussions, readings from sacred texts, and other spiritual refreshment in order to live a more centered life and to bring a deeper presence to the Meeting for Worship.

Friends believe that the spiritual path is best found in community. Create opportunities in your Meetings for people of all ages to explore and express their evolving relationship with the Divine, their spiritual highs and their doubts. If different metaphors and language interfere with communication, listen more deeply, honoring the Spirit in which the thought and words have their beginnings.

Do I live in thankful awareness of God's constant presence in my life?

Am I sensitive and obedient to the leadings of the Holy Spirit?

When do I take time for contemplation and spiritual refreshment?

What steps am I taking to center my life and to stay open to continuing revelation?

*Do we share our spiritual lives with others in the Meeting, seeking to know one another in that which is eternal?*

*Does the Meeting provide religious education including study of the Bible and Friends' history and practices?*

### Meeting for Worship for Business

Come to Meeting with hearts and minds prepared to be open and faithful to the leadings of the Spirit. Then the conduct of business will lead to truth, unity, and love.

When a matter is before the Meeting for Business, each person present contributes to the corporate search for a decision that accords with the will of God. Inaction is a form of action. Silent worship in the Meeting for Business contributes to the process of achieving unity.

Listen attentively to others' words and use the silence between messages to reflect carefully on what you might contribute. When you are clear, speak simply what is in your heart, without repeating what has already been offered. While making your insights clear, lay aside personal opinions and attend to what God requires.

Do I attend Meeting for Business regularly?

Do I speak in Meeting for Business only when I am led to speak?

*Is the Meeting for Business held as a Meeting for Worship in which we seek divine guidance for our actions?*

*Are we tender and considerate of different views, coming to a decision only when we have found unity?*

*Do we give prayerful support for our clerks that they may be sensitive to the movement of the Spirit among us?*

## Worship and Ministry Committee

[Faith & Practice 2001, pp. 114-116]

The Worship and Ministry Committee customarily consists of members of the Religious Society of Friends of varied ages, genders and gifts and who are known to be faithful in worship and sensitive to the life of the Spirit. It includes both Friends inclined to speak in the Meeting for Worship and those less inclined to do so. It also includes Friends who are acknowledged as spiritual elders, to whom persons go instinctively for understanding and loving care. The function of the committee is to nurture the spiritual health of the Meeting community.

The first responsibility of the committee's members is to deepen their own spiritual lives and their preparation for worship. When they are grounded in the Spirit, committee members can recall that they are but vessels of the Light among many other vessels. Then they can better trust that the power of God may work through all persons in the Meeting and beyond. Committee members' concern for the Meeting throughout the week, the promptness and reverence with which they approach the Meeting for Worship, and their faithfulness to the guidance of the Spirit, are the most effective ways they may deepen the quality of the worship. By deepening their own experience of worship, and by their regular presence at Meeting for Worship, committee members contribute to the corporate experience of a centered Meeting for Worship.

**Care for the meeting for worship:** the Worship and Ministry Committee meets regularly to keep the Meeting for Worship under constant review, prayer, and care. Committee members should nurture the Meeting for Worship by giving appropriate attention to the quality of the vocal ministry and the ministry of stillness that springs from the centered silence. They should encourage all Friends to give adequate time to study, meditation, prayer, and other ways of preparing themselves for worship. Members' concerns about worship are directed to this committee for prayerful consideration and action. At times, the committee should open its meeting to all to share experience, search for insight and nurture the spiritual health of the Meeting for Worship. Committee members should encourage those who show promising gifts and lovingly guide those who speak unacceptably, too often or for too long. They should endeavor to open the way for those who are timid and inexperienced in vocal ministry and should encourage all Friends to listen with tenderness. In trying to be helpful, they should not assume superior wisdom, trusting instead that all are sharing in the search for guidance.

**Care for the meeting for worship for business:** The Worship and Ministry Committee's responsibilities include nurturing Meeting for Worship for Business. At least a few members of this committee should be present at every Meeting for Business. The committee considers prayerfully how to contribute to the Meeting's faithful discernment of Truth. It works with the Presiding Clerk to develop his or her skills and to create a worshipful and faithful Business Meeting.

**Care for individual lives:** The committee seeks to strengthen the lives of the individuals in the Meeting by helping individuals discern and develop varied gifts for ministry and service. Committee members encourage vocal ministry, teaching and counseling, along with aesthetic, social, and practical modes of expression and regular spiritual disciplines. The Committee can support individual spiritual growth by circulating appropriate literature and arranging for study groups, spiritual sharing groups and retreats.

## **Worship and Ministry Committee Job Description (4/10/11)**

Meeting for Worship is at the center of our life as a community. The main purpose of the Worship and Ministry committee is to nurture the Meeting for Worship. When the Meeting community has a strong spiritual life, the spiritual lives of individuals as well as our corporate discernment of God's will are strengthened and blessed.

The Worship and Ministry Committee keeps the Meetings for Worship and Business under review, prayer and care. Committee members note the quality of both vocal and silent ministry during Meeting for Worship.

The committee works to create an environment conducive to a gathered Meeting. We help and encourage Friends and attenders to engage in spiritual study, meditation, prayer, and other ways of preparing themselves to worship.

The Committee also seeks to strengthen lives of individuals in the Meeting by helping individuals discern, ground, and grow into varied gifts for ministry and service. The committee is called to strengthen the Quaker tradition, as well as to be open to continuing revelation. We work to respond to our community's spiritual needs in the circumstances of our times.

As Faith and Practice notes, Worship and Ministry Committee customarily consists of seasoned Friends of varied ages and gifts who are known to be faithful in worship and sensitive to the life of the Spirit. It includes both Friends inclined to speak in the Meeting for Worship and those less inclined to do so...Also according to Faith and Practice, the first responsibility of the committee's members is to deepen their own spiritual lives and their preparation for worship. Committee members' concern for the Meeting throughout the week, the promptness and reverence with which they approach the Meeting for Worship, and their faithfulness to the guidance of the Spirit, are the most effective ways they may deepen the quality of the worship.

Specific functions and activities of the Worship and Ministry Committee include:

- Meeting For Worship
  - Arrange for greeting, closing, and reading of queries in Meeting for Worship
  - Provide support and guidance for spoken ministry
  - Work with the Facilities Committee to provide a setting for Meeting for Worship and to make Meeting for Worship accessible to people with disabilities
  - Work with the Mutual Care Committee to help arrange special worship meetings for those needing concerns held in the light or those unable to attend Meeting for Worship

- Information About Our Meeting
  - Make ourselves available to speak with Friends and attenders on matters of the Spirit and Quaker tradition
  - Provide informational pamphlets about Meeting for Worship, Spoken Ministry, Meeting for Business and other topics
  - Assure that basic information about our Meeting for Worship, such as time and location, is up to date in Quaker publications and directories
  - Respond to inquiries about our Meeting as needed, including voice mail messages left on the Meeting telephone.
  
- Work With Other Committees
  - Maintain contact with and provide spiritual support for Worship Groups under the Meeting's care
  - Communicate with other committees on matters affecting worship, ministry and spiritual growth
  - Hold at least one joint meeting with Care of the Meeting Committee during the year
  - Provide one committee member to serve on the State of the Meeting report committee
  
- Spiritual Learning
  - Organize and present educational programs about Quaker history and practices (e.g., Quakerism 101)
  - Organize and encourage other spiritual learning activities (e.g., book discussion groups, book reviews, etc.)
  - Present during the year up to six Third Sunday After-Meeting Programs which are timely and relevant to the current life and needs of the Meeting.
  - Encourage the spiritual context and relevancy of other Third Sunday After-Meeting Programs by providing guidelines, queries, and suggestions useful for all those bringing Third Sunday After-Meeting Programs
  
- Other Responsibilities
  - Arrange Memorial Meetings
  - Arrange and oversee clearness and anchoring committees for individuals in the Meeting seeking guidance and support for public ministry.
  - Oversee the Traveling Ministries Fund.
  - Work with other groups to provide queries for activities such as Retreats, Friendly Sevens, and Third Sunday After-Meeting Programs
  - Support administrative functions of the Meeting: the Clerk of Worship and Ministry Committee serves as a member of the Strawberry Creek Monthly Meeting Corporation Board and shall perform all duties required by the Bylaws of the Corporation (required regular Board Meetings are held annually during Strawberry Creek's May Meeting for Business, and decisions are arrived at by the Board under the guidance of Spirit).

Approved by SCM Meeting for Business, April 10, 2011

## Worship & Ministry Committee: Meeting's Anchoring Committee

*Worship & Ministry Committee may be thought of as serving Strawberry Creek Meeting in fulfilling its corporate spiritual ministry, similar to an anchoring/oversight committee serving an individual in fulfilling his/her spiritual ministry.*

### Creating a setting conducive for gathered silence each First Day Meeting for Worship

- Greeting
- Closing
- Announcements
- Organizing the Reading of Advices and Queries first of the month First Day
- Arranging for Occasional Outdoor Worship
- Ensuring inclusion of all, e.g.,
  - Welcoming newcomers to worship with us by providing a SCM brochure and by responding to SCM telephone inquiries made to (510) 524-9186
  - Offering Listening Devices to hard of hearing persons

### Bringing spiritual groundedness into Other SCM Committees and Functions

Liaison to Retreat Committee

Providing one of three persons who draft the Annual State of Meeting Report

Meeting jointly with Care of the Meeting Committee at least once a year

Creating appropriate queries for use in Friendly Sevens program

Making recommendations to Business Meeting re SCM Traveling Minute

### Serving as SCM Liaison to other Worship Meeting Groups beyond SCM First Day

Oakland Worship Meeting (Pam&Helen's house 5pm Sundays, 3708 Midvale Ave)

Over-the-Hill and Thru the Tunnel Mt Diablo (Contra Costa) Worship Meeting

(10am First Sunday of each month, rotating homes for monthly potluck)

Campus Mid-week (7am Wednesdays Canterbury House, 2334 Bancroft Way)

### Handling Memorial Meetings for Worship whose purpose is

- To reflect on the life/death of a particular individual
- To comfort the larger community generally with respect to all those (within and outside of SCM) who have recently passed on

### Providing support to individuals with respect to their own spiritual practice and ministry

- Available to talk one on one with individuals about SCM worship, or issues arising in their own spiritual practice
- Meet\* for worship in home/hospital of those unable to worship w/SCM First Day (in coordination with Mutual Care Committee)
- Fulfill requests from individuals for a ministry committee
  - to resolve a specific spiritual ministry issue (Clearness Committee),
  - to support\* them in fulfilling an ongoing spiritual leading/ministry (Anchoring Committee)
  - to sustain them long term and hold them accountable as they fulfill a ministry on behalf of SCM (Oversight Committee)
- Administering Traveling Ministries Fund to those eligible for small grant

\*Some are requesting ongoing support of unspecified duration, which has raised questions that still need to be addressed by Worship & Ministry Committee

# Meeting for Worship Roles

## Greeter for the Month

The role of the greeter is to welcome people as they enter meeting. Make sure your demeanor is warm and pleasant, with eye contact to each one entering when possible. Here are some suggestions:

Get to the meeting by at least 9:50 so you are ready to welcome people. As people come to the door, open the door for them.

Make sure that the sign for turning off cell phones is up, that there is a circle of chairs outside, that the Assistive Listening headsets are set out (check the batteries at least once a month!), and that there are Quaker pamphlets available on the display table (three types: Strawberry Creek Meeting (yellow), Meeting for Business (green), and Meeting for Worship (blue)).

At 10am (or a little after if there is a steady flow of people coming in), begin to direct people to sit outside to sit in the outside circle of chairs until 10:15 (instead of entering meeting for worship).

During these fifteen minutes between 10 and 10:15am, stand/sit outside near the entrance (but not immediately in front of the door so as not to block anyone inside who has to exit the interior meeting for worship). Stay alert (not sitting with eyes closed!) to continue directing latecomers to the circle of chairs.

At 10:15, check through the door window to see that no one is giving vocal ministry and then go to the circle of people waiting outside and invite them to join you inside at the Meeting for Worship. Hold the door open as those outside file inside, as you enter last.

During the remainder of the worship hour, sit inside near the entrance door and postpone entry of anyone until the completion of any vocal ministry. Remain alert to assist with the door those entering/exiting the room.

**Assistive Listening Devices:** the Meeting has three headphones with microphones (adjustable volume) that can be worn by anyone who, when listening, needs greater volume than the normal speaking voice. Each Sunday Facilities Committee is to set the box holding the assistive listening devices near your Greeter's chair.

- Be sure these devices are displayed near the entrance so that those who need them can see them and get one.
- Periodic announcements should be made to remind the Meeting, including newcomers, of their availability.
- At least once during your one month assignment as Greeter, check to make sure that the batteries are working in all three headsets.

(6/2/11)

## Closer for the Month

The meeting for worship Closer is very important in transitioning out of worship silence. Be sure to speak in a relaxed voice, especially being gentle as you speak aloud the first time to break the silence of the ending worship hour. Here are some suggestions:

1. Close meeting at 11am by offering your hand to those persons sitting near you and quietly saying "Good Morning." If a vocal ministry has just ended, wait an appropriate pause before shaking hands, even if the worship hour must be extended past 11am.

2. After people have greeted their neighbors, stand and offer an opportunity for the Speaking of Names to be held in the Light. You may say:

*Because we are a spiritual community and we value the Quaker tradition of holding each other in the light, at this time we invite you to speak the name, and the name only, of anyone you would like our Meeting to hold in the Light. After the names have been spoken, we will have a short silence.*

Allow an appropriate (brief) time of silence following the last name, then close with:

*Thank you, Friends. We will now go around the room and introduce ourselves by saying our name aloud. If you are new to the meeting, please tell us where you are from and if you have been away for awhile, tell us where you have been. Please speak loudly so everyone in meeting can hear you.*

3. Start the introductions by saying your own name and then indicate to the next person that it is their turn to speak their name. Be prepared to tap someone on the shoulder to indicate it is their turn to say their name aloud.

4. After everyone has spoken their name, transition from introductions to announcements:

*Before we go around the room for announcements, I'd like to draw your attention to the table (point). Over there you'll find a guest book for visitors that we hope you will sign. Beside your name, there is a space to indicate if you would like to receive our newsletter for a few months. There is also a space to indicate that you would like someone from the Meeting to contact you to learn more about our Meeting. I'm also available after rise of meeting to talk or answer questions.*

*On that table you will also see a red box for financial contributions. Financial support is only one of many different ways to support our Meeting.*

*Now we will have brief announcements of interest to the meeting. You may give details on a flier posted on the bulletin board outside. Please stand and say your name first and speak loudly so we can all hear your announcement. Is there anyone with an announcement in this section? (point)."*

(6/2/11)

5. Go around the room in sections. Sometimes it may be necessary to remind people to say their name first or to speak loudly (this can be done silently by you or others having trouble hearing, by raising one hand, and cupping the other hand over an ear. Shouting “Speak up! or “Louder!” is discouraged!). Interrupt announcements when the children come into the room, so they can say their name aloud to the assembled group.

6. On the first Sunday of each month, someone will read the Advices and Queries from one of our committees. At the end of the announcements, ask the members of the committee responsible for reading Advices and Queries for that month to stand. Thank them for their service to meeting.

7. After announcements, invite people to enjoy refreshments outside.

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[Optional] Select an appropriate quote and read it just after welcoming people: “*Worship and Ministry would like to share this Quaker quote with you.*”

[Optional] Ask members of Worship and Ministry Committee to stand, and invite people who have questions about Quaker meeting to see any one of them.

[Optional] When the number of latecomers is especially high, consider reading this:

*Gathering the Meeting: each of us is important*

*Gathering the meeting is the mysterious processes at the heart of our experience as Friends. The phrase is a short way of saying “gathering one another in the spirit.” We release ourselves to the care of God, opening our hearts to that of God in one another and to the spirit moving among us. Friends speak of the Meeting as “gathered” when we reach a shared experience of spiritual communion. This can be a delicate and even daunting process, especially when we are new to the Society of Friends. Because each person’s contribution is necessary for the meeting to gather, it becomes a sacred and joyful duty for each of us to be present and settled in the silence by 10am when meeting begins.*

*Of course there will be exceptional occasions when any one of us is prevented from arriving at meeting promptly. The 10:15 seating is intended for those rare exceptions: it is not merely an alternative arrival time. Two or three people can slip in quietly at 10:15, but when one third of the meeting arrives at that time, the gathered worship can be difficult to maintain. While everyone is welcomed, whenever they arrive, Ministry and Worship urges every one to arrive before, rather than after, 10. Those who habitually arrive several minutes early have found it a great delight to begin the gathering of the meeting and by their presence invite others to join them.*

*Here is a query for reflection: How does my arrival and participation at Meeting for Worship affect the beloved community and the quality of our worship together?*

**Advices and Queries from Faith and Practice**  
*Assignments for reading aloud in Meeting for Worship*  
*and presenting committee reflections in Meeting for Worship for Business*

Strawberry Creek Monthly Meeting 2011 – 2012

September	Stewardship and Vocation (p. 49)	Care of the Meeting
October	Reaching Out (p. 53)	Mutual Care
November	Social and Civic Responsibility (p. 52)	Site
December	Simplicity (p. 54)	First Day School
January	Harmony with Creation (p. 51)	Ministry & Worship
February	Integrity and Personal Conduct (p. 55)	Communications
March	Peace (p. 57)	Loaves & Fishes Peace, Earthcare & Social Witness
April	The Meeting Community (p. 58)	Finance
May	Meeting for Worship (p. 47)	Nominating
June	Meeting for Worship for Business (p. 48)	Facilities
July	Spiritual Life (p. 48)	

*Readings (and page numbers) are from the hard copy 2001 edition of Pacific Yearly Meeting Faith and Practice. Also posted online*  
<http://www.pacificyearlymeeting.org/fp/pymfp2001pg031.html>

On the first First Day of the month, a committee member will read the Advices and Queries during the first fifteen minutes of Meeting for Worship. On the second First Day, following the opening silence of Meeting for Worship on the Occasion of Business, the reflections of the committee on the assigned Advices and Queries will be reported.

*To be read prior to reading the Advices and Queries in Meeting for Worship:*

“The Advices and Queries are read each month to bring before us the discoveries and counsel that Friends over the years have found central to our worship and to our daily lives. They are read in Meeting not to suggest a theme for spoken ministry for the day, but to offer material for personal reflection in the gathered silence.

The Advices and Queries for this month are on \_\_\_\_\_ “

(6/2/11)

## **Strawberry Creek Meeting Vocal Ministry Practices (9/2009)**

*The purpose of our Vocal Ministry Practices is to articulate our Meeting's longing for a spiritually rich worship experience on First Day and to set out the practices we have developed to support us in having that worship experience.*

We come to Meeting for Worship knowing that we will gather in stillness – to listen, to be silent, to speak as we are led by the Inward Light. In that there is that of God in everyone, our experience is that Divine Presence may speak through any of us.

We rise to speak out of the silence. Not acting on impulse but after careful discernment, we speak in obedience to our leading that we may serve the Sacred by speaking “the voice that wants to be heard”. Vocal ministry serves the group, here and now, for the enrichment of the community -- most particularly to turn people to their Inward Teacher or Guide.

Listening with open hearts, we receive the vocal ministry of others as an opportunity to hear the Spirit speaking to us. If a message doesn't speak to us now, it may speak to someone else, or may nourish us in unexpected ways later.

We allow time for silence between vocal ministries so that the full import of each spoken message can be carefully contemplated and held in the Light of discernment.

*We speak from what we ourselves have tasted and handled spiritually, not as a subject for discussion, but as a window into our own inner experience.*

A message that arises from a deeply centered place is often direct and to the point, in keeping with our tradition of simplicity.

A message is spontaneous, not planned. Rising to speak we trust Spirit to provide the words and continue to seek to be led by Spirit even as we are speaking. We do not hinder our ability to listen to the Divine Presence by attempting to deliver a memorized message or written text. Vocal ministry is not meant to be a display of eloquence or an opportunity for self-expression.

Absorbing rather than reacting to what we have heard, we avoid speaking directly to a previous message, including contradicting or correcting. Therefore we neither answer, debate, disagree, nor try to solve someone else's problem.

Believing that the message the Sacred has led us to speak is seasoned, whole, and complete, our practice is to speak no more than once during the worship hour.

Strawberry Creek Meeting (5/17/10)  
Use of Time After Rise of Meeting for Worship

Guiding Principles

- The job of every committee is to nurture the life of the Meeting
- Each committee is expected to engage in a process of ongoing discernment about the needs and interests of the Meeting as these change over time, drawing on past practice and job descriptions without rigid adherence to any set of tasks
- Each committee should determine how it will serve the Meeting, which may include scheduling an event of interest for the time after rise of Meeting. A representative who is an adjunct member of a committee will work through that committee; other representatives will consult with the clerk of meeting.
- The committee sponsoring an after-Meeting session should be free to decide upon the content and format of the session
- Committees should try to plan ahead for the year as much as possible, and should consult with each other to use the limited number of days effectively
- Committees should resolve schedule conflicts and accommodate unanticipated events by discerning what will best serve the needs and interests of the Meeting through consultation, worship, and discussion by committee clerks and members
- Multiple events at rise of Meeting are acceptable (and encouraged) when they are likely to appeal to different participants or have different starting times
- Continue using the Meeting calendar coordinated by newsletter editor as an opportunity for clerks and others to consult with each other when schedule conflicts occur, rather than as a “first come, first served” reservation system
- The ways that Meeting uses time after rise of Meeting should be flexible enough to change with changing needs

## Use of Time after Rise of Meeting

1<sup>st</sup> First Days – Focus on activities involving small groups and special events – be open to multiple activities and new interest groups that nurture Quaker thought and practice

- Mt. Diablo Worship Group, Young Adults Brunch, Quaker 12-step group
- Other groups, as they develop
- Meeting Retreat in May
- Special events

2<sup>nd</sup> First Days: Meeting for Business (except August)

3<sup>rd</sup> First Days – Focus on large-group Quaker education, witness, and reflection under the care of various committees – these events should be available to the whole Meeting (without the competition of multiple events on the schedule) and have a Quaker orientation

- State of Meeting Listening Meeting in February
- Worship & Ministry Committee to schedule up to six sessions throughout the year for adult religious education and other topics, which may include extending invitations to individuals or other committees to develop sessions of interest
- Peace, Earthcare, & Social Witness Committee to schedule up to four sessions per year approximately once per quarter
- Leave at least one date available for other committees (such as Care of Meeting session on membership), other listening meetings (e.g., as needed by Site Committee), or Hospitality events (welcomings for new members and babies)

4<sup>th</sup> First Days – Focus on committee meetings and sessions of interest to people who might not be on a committee – be open to other activities whenever possible (don't restrict these days to committee meetings only)

- Committee meetings
- Nominating Committee option to schedule one to two information sessions for members and attenders who have not previously served on a committee
- Care of Meeting Committee Newcomers Brunch (one to two per year)
- Hospitality events (which can take place before other meetings)

5<sup>th</sup> First Days – Focus on using these dates to accommodate additional sessions as needed, including Quaker education (there are four 5<sup>th</sup> First Days per year, but at least one usually falls on Memorial Day weekend or during Christmas – New Years week)

- Hospitality events
- Other committee events and sessions

Worship & Ministry Committee Report  
on Assuming Responsibility for Adult Religious Education  
March 2011 Meeting for Business  
*John McCarthy, Convener, Spiritual Learning Workgroup*

## Introduction and Summary Recommendation

In the spring of 2010, Strawberry Creek Meeting's Adult Religious Education Committee recommended that its responsibilities be transferred back to Worship and Ministry Committee, where they had been over a decade earlier. Worship and Ministry Committee agreed to try that arrangement during 2010-11, and report back on our experience, along with a recommendation about whether to continue in that manner.

In general, Worship and Ministry Committee thinks having had responsibility for Adult Religious Education has been reasonably successful. But we would also add some caveats that may be pertinent to other committees as Strawberry Creek continues to consolidate its volunteer work into fewer committees

## Adult Religious Education Responsibilities

Based on previous experience of the Adult Religious Education Committee as well as our own experience this year, these responsibilities can be grouped into the following three categories:

- Third Sunday Programs after Meeting for Worship
- Quakerism 101 and other Spiritual Education activities
- Encouraging other kinds of self-education

## Subcommittee on Spiritual Learning

It quickly became clear that coming up with third Sunday programs and other adult religious education opportunities would require more time than would fit into parts of our regular Worship and Ministry Committee meetings. So we decided to form a subcommittee, which we called the Spiritual Learning Working Group because we thought that "Spiritual" sounded more inclusive and congenial than "Religious" and "Learning" sounded more cooperative and non-hierarchical than "Education." During this past year John McCarthy clerked the Spiritual Learning Working Group. Worship and Ministry Committee also formed another working group to deal with details of public ministry anchor committees.

In addition to its clerk, initial members of the Spiritual Learning Working Group included Anne Brown, Todd Osmundson, and our Worship and Ministry Committee Clerk, Sarah Hawthorne. It met nearly every month during the past year. Unfortunately, Anne Brown's health issues prevented her from participating after the first few months, so the committee was a bit short-handed. In the future, we would recommend trying to recruit at least two additional people from outside the Worship and Ministry Committee to help serve on the Spiritual Learning Working Group.

Members of the Worship and Ministry Committee who serve concurrently on the Spiritual Learning Working Group thus can expect to average two meetings each month - one for the working group and one for the full committee -- in addition to additional email and telephone calls. The clerks of Worship and Ministry probably averaged several hours each week preparing agendas and writing email and documents in addition to clerking meetings of the working group and full committee.

During the past year, the Spiritual Learning Group sponsored, co-sponsored and/or helped coordinate and announce several third Sunday programs, including

October 17 Listening Meeting:

How Meeting Corporately Holds Personal Concerns in the Light

November 21 Holiday and "Season of Light" Reflections

January 16 Nominations Process and Meeting Service as a Spiritual Practice

Jan 30 - War Tax Resistance as a spiritual practice (PECSW)

February 20 Listening Meeting for State of the Meeting Report

March 20 All About Pacific Yearly Meeting -- past, present and future

April 17 Listening meeting on support for same sex marriage (Mutual Care Committee)

May 13-15 College Park Quarterly Meeting Spring Session at Quaker Center

We have also developed a series of queries for other third-Sunday programs to encourage emphasis on spiritual questions and values:

- How has Spirit worked in your committee with respect to this subject?
- In what ways is your work in this area different because you engage in Quaker process and traditions?
- What would you like those attending to take away that furthers their experience and understanding of being a Quaker participating in a spiritual community?

The Spiritual Learning Group also developed a questionnaire to solicit suggestions about how to follow up on successful Quakerism 101 program that its predecessor Adult Religious Education Committee had developed and implemented the previous spring (2010). Based on 27 responses to that questionnaire plus subsequent discussion and discernment, the Spiritual Learning Group recommended and our Worship and Ministry endorsed the idea of trying to create several discussion groups that would meet one or more times on a particular topic, usually focused on a book or pamphlet. After recruiting discussion leaders for three topics, we announced the groups to Meeting via email, Newsletter, and verbal announcements in early March. People interested in a particular group will contact the organizer and agree on meeting times and further details.

In cooperation with the Communications Committee and Newsletter Editor, we have also begun encouraging Strawberries to contribute comments and reviews of books and pamphlets they think might be of interest to other Strawberries.

## Conclusions

At its last meeting, Worship and Ministry Committee was in unity, along with its Spiritual Learning Working Group, that resuming responsibilities for spiritual learning has worked reasonably well, and that it has been helpful to unify spiritual learning as well as worship and business meeting responsibilities under one committee.

Although it has no doubt saved some time for Nominating Committee not to have to find a clerk and members for a separate Adult Religious Education Committee, it may require more time to find more members for the larger Worship and Ministry Committee that this new arrangement requires -- and to find people willing to work more serving as clerk of Worship and Ministry and at least one or two people able and willing to serve as clerks of its working groups, particularly the Spiritual Education Working Group.

We expect that similar issues will probably arise for other expanded committees that will be taking on more consolidated responsibilities during the coming year. They will probably need to set up subcommittees with their own clerks in order to deal with the increased number of different responsibilities.

Clerking sub-committees can help provide good training for future committee clerks, but that demands more time and effort on the part of the committee clerk -- to counsel, review, and help the work of subcommittee clerks. It also requires even more skilled committee clerks who can manage subcommittees as well as clerking the full committee.

## Other Responsibilities - 2011 Spring Retreat

Due to special circumstances, Strawberry Creek's Retreat Committee requested our Worship and Ministry Committee and its Spiritual Learning Working Group to help plan the program for this year's Spring Retreat. We have met with the clerk and members of the Retreat Committee and are excited about how the Spring Retreat is shaping up.

In the future, however, we do not think it would be a good idea to add Retreat responsibilities as well as Spiritual Learning responsibilities to Worship and Ministry's already quite full plate.

(6/2/11)

**Past Adult Education Session Topics and presenters**  
**as announced in the SCM newsletters 2001-2010**

compiled by James Hosley

**2001**

- July --- sponsored by W&M: On Becoming an Earth-Activist w/Kristina Perry
- Aug --- No announcement
- Sept. --- sponsored by W&M: \*Living our Testimonies in the Modern World\* Barbara Graves
- Oct. REMINDER: **STRAWBERRY CREEK MEETING HAS MOVED**  
As of October 7, **Berkeley Alternative School**, Martin Luther King and Derby Street  
--- Quakerism 101: questions answered, gathering hosted by Oversight Committee.  
--- sponsored by W&M: "Our New Faith & Practice: The New Queries" Leonard Joy.
- Nov. --- sponsored by W&M: "Our New Faith & Practice: Part II."
- Dec. --- Quakerism 101: questions answered, gathering hosted by Oversight Committee.

**2002** (Adult Religious Education was still the work of Worship & Ministry Committee)

- Jan. --- Quakerism 101: questions answered, gathering hosted by Oversight Committee  
--- Quakerism and Christianity. Lisa Mc Kinney and Eric Moon to facilitate.
- Feb. --- Deepening Our Faith Series, "Meeting for Worship", w/ R. Standish
- March --- Deepening O F Series, "M4Worship, on Business", w/ Barbara Graves
- April --- Deepening O F Series, "Community" (F & P), w/ K. Youngm. & K. Perry
- May --- D O Faith Series, "The Testimonies", w/ Leonard Joy & Gordon Bishop
- June --- No announcement
- July --- No announcement
- Aug. --- 'James Nayler, Quaker Martyr' w/ Eric Moon (follow-up mtg. to Thursday night)
- Sept --- TBA is only thing in newsletter
- Oct. --- Deepening Our Faith Series, TBA from F & P
- Nov. --- Deepening Our Faith Series, TBA from F & P
- Dec. --- Deepening Our Faith Series, TBA from F & P

**2003** (Adult Religious Education was still the work of Worship & Ministry Committee )

- Jan. --- Deepening Our Faith Series, "Worship", TBA
- Feb. --- Deepening Our Faith Series, 'Listening', w/Doug Steere's "Listening to One Another"
- March --- Listed the same as Feb.
- April --- 'Openings Through Sacred Reading' w/ Tom Davis of Santa Cruz Mtg.
- May --- TBA is only thing in newsletter Q 101, 6 weekly sessions starts this month
- June --- TBA (tentatively, Faith in Action, Spirit-led Witness)
- July --- 'Games', to build community, using processes new to SCM
- Aug. --- No announcement
- Sept. --- 'Weaving the Social Fabric of The Meeting'
- Oct. --- 'Mysticism & Activism', w/ Laura Magnani & Elaine Emily
- Nov. --- 11/11 'Classic Quakerism' w/ Lloyd Lee Wilson at Friends Church  
--- 11/16 "Undaunted Zeal" w/ Elsa Glines
- Dec. --- No announcement

**2004** (Adult Religious Education was still the work of Worship & Ministry Committee)

- Jan. --- 'Quaker Values in the Workplace'
- Feb. --- 'Community Building Through Participation In the Life of the Mtg.'
- March --- 'Living From Radical Trust: Walking w/ J. Woolman', w/ Rachel F.
- April --- 'Quakers and Money' with Ruth Frazier of AFSC
- May --- 'Centered Ministry in Troubled Times – In Meeting for Worship'
- June --- A Discussion of M4Worship, facilitated by 'The Teens'
- July --- TBA is only thing in newsletter
- Aug. --- No announcement
- Sept. --- A Conversation – 'Our Responses to Others' Perceptions of God's Will'
- Oct. --- 'A Celebration of Our Work As Peacemakers'
- Nov. --- 'What Did Geo. Fox Teach About Christ?', w/ a pamphlet by L. Benson
- Dec. --- A Video – "Can We All Be Friends?" Commonality within our practices.

**2005**

- Jan. --- 'Not Your Mamma's Clerking Workshop'
- Feb. --- TBA is only thing in newsletter
- March --- Nurturing Vocal Ministry in Meeting for Worship
- April --- 'Discernment'
- May --- 'Reaching Out'
- June --- 'Supporting Members with Non-Quaker Partners'
- July --- TBA is only thing in newsletter
- Aug. --- No announcement (It is August )
- Sept. --- 'Report From The Young Friends World Gathering'
- Oct. --- 'Living In the World As A Quaker' ( using some new process )
- Nov. --- 'Personal Finances'
- Dec. --- 'Forgiveness'

**2006**

- Jan. --- Clearness Committees, Support Groups and Accompaniment (Worship & Ministry)
- Feb. --- A four-week series on the Pendle Hill Pamphlet *Creeds and Quakers: What's Belief Got To Do With It?* by Robert Griswold, held Thursdays, in BMM Meeting House library. Robert Griswold visited us a few years ago (Brinton Visitor).
- Mar. --- Speaking truth nonviolently and connecting with that of God in ourselves and others.
- April & May --- TBA is only thing in newsletter
- June -- "What are you waiting for, and how?" how Friends prepare for Meeting for Worship what practices they employ to "center down" during Meeting, and what they have experienced of God, of the Spirit, of the Divine through the Meeting for Worship.
- July & Aug --- No announcement
- Sept. --- TBA is only thing in newsletter
- Oct. --- What's Next for Earthcare Witness in SCM? : Report from "Holding Earth in the Light" Retreat.
- Nov. --- Subject: Nominating process.
- Dec. --- Subject: Darkness and Light.

## 2007

- Jan. & Feb. --- TBA is only thing in newsletter  
March --- Holding Marriages Under Care of Meeting – Lisa Hubbell  
April & May --- TBA is only thing in newsletter – contact Lisa Hubbell  
June --- What does it mean to be Quaker ? Why do I come to Meeting ?  
How do I answer, ‘What does it mean to be Quaker’ ?  
July-Aug --- TBA is only thing in newsletter  
Sept --- Yearly Meeting \_ How could it be improved ?  
Oct. --- Video and discussion of ‘Rufus Jones’  
Nov. & Dec. --- TBA is only thing in newsletter

## 2008

- Jan. --- Challenges & Consequences of Living Our Quaker Values.  
Panel: Betsy M., K. Youngmeister, Al Thompson  
1/29/08 --- Series started: Exploring the Heart of Quakerism  
Feb. --- Friendly Aging – Friends House ( A Friends House panel )  
2/12 & 2/26 -- Exploring the Heart of Quakerism series continues  
March --- No announcement  
April --- Vocal Ministry, with Rachel F. and Lisa H.  
May --- PE&S Witness – Meeting Reps (AFSC, FCL, FCNL, EBSC, etc.)  
June --- No announcement  
July --- No announcement  
Aug --- No announcement  
Sept. --- Leadings – Elaine Emily  
Oct. --- How Do Spirit & Politics Intersect in Your Life ?  
Nov. --- How Can We Be Faithful to God’s Leading Today ?  
Dec. --- No announcement

## 2009

- Jan. --- Why Are We Called Hicksites ? with Brian Vura-Weis  
Feb. --- The Meaning of Membership  
March --- Worship & Ministry – Deepening Meeting for Worship  
April --- Deepening Our Spiritual Practice – What Strengthens Us Between Meetings ?  
May --- No announcement  
June --- No announcement  
July --- Personal Spiritual Practices with Kathy Barnhart, Rich Herbert & Helen Haug  
Aug. --- Ministering to Returning Veterans, with Zack Moon  
Sept. --- “Going To the Well” primitive Christianity w/ S. Matchett  
Oct. --- Quakers & Beauty (Art) -- Sarah Hawthorne, & Phyllis M.  
Nov. --- Holiday or “Season of Light” Reflections. Speakers will start us off,  
followed by group sharing.  
Dec. --- Date and time is only thing in newsletter

**2010**

- Jan. --- No announcement
- Feb. --- Reading from Thomas Kelley's *A Testament of Devotion*
- Mar. --- PE&S Witness sponsors a talk on East Bay Sanctuary Covenant  
w/ former staff attorney ( & SCM attender ) Kusia Hreshchyshyn
- Apr. --- Quakerism 101 begins 6 Mon. evening sessions ( 3 in Apr & 3 in May )
- May --- Quakerism 101 continues with 3 Mon. evening sessions  
--- Money and Spirituality led by Susan Burr (evenings)
- June --- PYM Rep. Tom Y. offers info on the upcoming annual PYM gathering

*Following committee year, July 2010 – June 2011, Worship & Ministry pilot year doing Adult Religious Education) @March 2010 Meeting for Business, adult religious education officially transferred back to Worship & Ministry Committee, thereafter called Spiritual Learning*

## Memorial Meeting To Do List – Sarah Hawthorne (May 25, 2011)

The following is based on my experience; other approaches may work equally well.

**The first step is determining whether our Meeting (or another group) is taking lead responsibility for the memorial meeting.** Sometimes the family or another community is the primary host, and our Meeting takes a “what do you need” role.

**Identify a single SCM Meeting person who “represents” the Meeting** in dealings with the “outside world”, e.g., family members, site, other interested communities, etc. Often this person is the convener of the memorial meeting committee, but not always. By designating one person for this role there is someone continuously up-to-date with everything that’s happening in terms of making external arrangements. Internally, several different folks within our Meeting will be assigned tasks, and all they have to do is be sure the Meeting’s one designate is kept apprised. This approach may sound strange, but often the various conversations contain/require critical information and if different people are collecting the information (and not up to speed with what someone else has learned/said), inevitably confusion arises.

**Request Family select their Spokesperson:** Once you know the names of family members, the SCM representative contact sends an email with the name of all known family members indicating that the family needs to choose a family spokesperson who speaks on behalf of the family for purpose of making memorial meeting decisions. That family person may spend lots of time internally discussing with other family members what they want to do (our Meeting does not need to become involved in intra-family differences), and will then convey to our Meeting the family’s decision re photo to use, family history narrative, what date works best given everyone’s schedule, etc. If the family doesn’t seem able to “pick” a family rep – usually they can – consider the “legal” hierarchy of relatives, namely, closest kin (surviving spouse first, if none then, depending on deceased’s age – surviving child or parent).

In the event SCM is the primary host of the memorial (and other communities, e.g., family, neighbors, another faith community) simply need to be invited, **the first immediate step is to locate a site and secure a date for memorial meeting.** The prerequisite step to this is understanding if there are any “critical” invitees/relatives that must be able to attend, because the date must be selected to work for their schedule.

***Note: SCM does not (unless there’s paperwork on file explicitly empowering SCM to handle the body) participate in any way in issues related to disposal of the body.*** There are laws indicating who has the legal power to make such decisions, and since our memorial meetings don’t display the body, we don’t need to coordinate with body care issues (sometimes a few family members, very close friends, do a private ceremony around body disposal (cemetery, dispensing ashes, etc.), but that’s separate from the memorial meeting SCM offers.

*Once you have the site/date (which involves **working with SCM Treasurer to provide insurance verification form and check**), these are the tasks that need to be arranged for ahead of time:*

**Disseminating notice of event:** someone has to write up the when/where blurb that will go out to the SCM listserv and if there's time, go into the SCM newsletter/google calendar. This blurb will be available and ready to give to other communities/relatives who want the event information to be distributed through their info channels.

**Written Personal History:** this is a wonderful experience for those involved (family members often find creating this together is very meaningful). It's very meaningful to collect information/stories from other communities in which the deceased has participated, as it offers a view into aspects of the deceased's life that may be otherwise unknown. My experience is one (or at most two) persons should be the writers and others contribute to them the stories or agree to being interviewed. These personal historians can fan out and talk to lots of folks, but after they've written the personal history, the Meeting's representative will want to take the written narrative history to the family spokesperson for review/approval about what/how things are said, who is mentioned as surviving, etc. This personal history will be included in the Memorial Meeting brochure, and supports a rich sharing during the Memorial Meeting.

**Flower/Food donations:** someone needs to be the point person to assist those who want to bring flowers from their gardens (or wire flowers from a florist). This person(s) makes verbal announcements in advance and is listed as a contact for flowers in the written announcement blurb. At the Memorial Meeting, s/he places the flowers around the memorial meeting room and afterwards brings them to the social hour. The same (or a different person) similarly serves as a contact person for those wanting to bring food to the Memorial Meeting, see Social Hour below.

**Memorial Meeting Program:** one or more people need to develop the actual program – outside length is usually an hour and a half (an hour is common). At the Memorial Meeting the clerk of SCM often opens with a description of Quaker traditions (so that family/friends not from Quaker tradition become acquainted with the format/expectations). In addition to being read aloud, this explanation of Quaker traditions pertinent to a Memorial Meeting is also usually printed on the inside flap of the memorial meeting brochure. This introduction may be the only “structured” portion of the Memorial Meeting, after which the program shifts to a worship-sharing silence. If a large gathering is expected, those present may be encouraged to allow family members to speak first before others share.

**Memorial Brochure:** often the folks writing the narrative history (and other tasks) aren't the best folks to do the actual layout/printing of the memorial meeting brochure that will be passed out (and cherished afterwards). Find a computer geek who can create layout (integrating photo, personal history text, drawings, quote, etc.). Standard layout:

deceased's photo on front cover w/quote, left inside flap Quaker tradition for memorial services, right inside/back flap personal history of the deceased (see attached sample).

**Memorial Table:** displaying informal photographs (or other memorabilia) of the deceased on a table at the Memorial Meeting is a treasured tradition (it requires that the Notice of the Event blurb cue people to bring photos). Otherwise, preparation is simple – just set up a small table with a white table cloth, where those attending the Memorial Meeting can set up their photographs so that others can enjoy them. A bulletin board can be helpful.

**Set-Up Crew:** usually some physical changes need to be done to the site itself, e.g., put chairs in a circle, rope off in some fashion a section for the family up front, creating an open space where those in wheelchairs can be placed, etc. Often those serving as ushers will double in this role, but not always if those serving as ushers don't have the physical strength to move furniture.

**Ushers:** An usher is needed for every open door to the room, to hand out memorial brochures. If it's a double door, an usher on each side of a wide door is needed. When the deceased is an older person (which means lots of the friends are going to be older) have an assigned general escort = an additional person (not assigned to a door), whose sole job is to walk to their seats family members (who don't know where the reserved family seats are), wheelchair users (to identify best locations), and in general those with mobility disabilities who need a steady arm.

**Social Hour:** in the past the Hospitality Committee could be called upon to show up with the appropriate food (not clear which Meeting committee has assumed these responsibilities). Because the primary purpose of the social gathering afterwards is to talk/reflect, mix/mingle, the practice has been finger-sized foods that don't need to be heated or otherwise require preparation to be ready as soon as the Memorial Meeting ends. Remember, the focus is on everyone coming together during the memorial meeting, rather than asking a few folks alone trying to create a hot meal served on time to a large group of people.

Front flap:

[photo of Irene]

Text underneath:

*Irene was the spark that lit many of our fires. She embodied spirit and encouragement and risk and creativity. It didn't matter if you were her kin, her friend, or a passerby. She would look you square in the face, and let you know there was no better thing than to "Love yourself!"*

*Irene would be the first one to make sure we celebrate the passing of her spirit into a better place. She showed us all what was important in life, how to sort through the priorities and understand the deeper truth of what lies within. Our family will always cherish our beloved Irene for the bounty of love and wisdom she gave us all, and her ability to offer us her full presence. – from Irene Kahn's family*

Left inside flap:

Meeting for Worship on the Occasion of  
Celebrating the Life of Irene Kahn

3pm Sunday April 11, 2010  
Berkeley Friends Church

A Quaker Memorial Meeting follows the same form as a Meeting for Worship, which is the core of Quaker Practice.

As a community who knew Irene Kahn, today we gather in silence to remember and celebrate her life. We come in both sadness and thanksgiving to share our memories, thoughts and feelings. Friends believe that there is that of God in everyone. We seek to mark that of God that lived in Irene and to affirm those things we now carry with us.

If you have arrived early, please help us prepare the room for worship by remaining silent.

The responsibility for the spiritual depth of the meeting rests with each attender. Those who keep silence as well as those who give a vocal message do their part when they yield their minds and hearts to the guidance of the Spirit.

As we sit in expectant quiet, we may be moved by the Spirit to share a message. Please do so without undue length, being mindful that others may be so moved. Everyone participates equally and all are welcome to speak. You may be moved to share prayers, poems, anecdotes or song. Please allow a few moments to hear and reflect on each message before offering yours.

We will worship together for about an hour. The clerk will close our time of worship by shaking hands with those next to her, a signal to all of us to shake hands with those nearby. After this memorial meeting, we will join in fellowship in the upstairs room.

## Right Inside Flap, with carryover to backside

Born in 1926 in New York City to a Russian (Lithuanian) Jewish father and a German Jewish mother, Irene was the youngest of two daughters. A self-starter, Irene attended Queens College part time for many years, prior to earning her college degree from New York Empire State College. She was a dynamo of energy, creatively expressing herself as a ceramicist and artist of unique skill and style. Her home in Queens, New York was a virtual gallery of her work. When she moved to California, she kept up her work, papering her wall with the artistry and wisdom of her paintings.

Irene was a devoted Mother, and family (both nuclear and beyond) was always a very important part of her life. After moving to California, she continued to stay connected with cherished relatives who lived back east. She was affectionately regarded as the family historian.

She was an avid outdoor explorer, driving along the back roads of the Bay Area, and adventuring out on all types of trips that included white-water rafting, camping in Yellowstone Park, Spirit Rock Retreats, hiking in Muir Woods and Point Reyes, and countless others.

Irene's spirit triumphed over the physical pain she experienced during the last years of her life (her legs, ribs and pelvis were severely injured when hit by a van while walking across the street). Even after her accident, she would take herself to Lake Anza or to one of her various indoor pools in Berkeley and swim in all kinds of weather. When she was no longer able to venture out to her favorite get-away spots, Irene continued her zest for adventure and living life fully through her abundant friendships and strong connections with her community groups.

[Irene had a long and generous career which included teaching many and varied arts and crafts to appreciative adults in many communities](#), including ten years at California Community Homes (formerly Christian Church Homes of California), which is the parent organization that operates Strawberry Creek Lodge, where she lived the last 18 years of her life.

Her free and open spirit saw God in many places. She stayed connected to her Jewish ancestry throughout her life, belonged to Buddhist Sanghas (Wednesday and Thursday Night Meditation Communities in Berkeley), and immensely enjoyed Spirit Rock Retreat Center in Marin. She began attending Strawberry Creek Friends Meeting around April 2002, and identified with Quaker Friends when asked by hospital staff.

Continuously surrounded by her family and many cherished friends during her final two week hospitalization for leukemia, Irene passed on March 8, 2010 in Oakland, California at Kaiser Hospital. She is survived by her older sister Beatrice Vlodkowsky; her four children, Graham, Owen, Paul, and Nancy; daughter-in-law Tracy Johnson; Nancy's partner Will Harden; former husband Flewid (Warren) Kahn; beloved nieces Diane Kullen and husband Alan Kullen, Paula Vlodkowsky, Harriet Halpern and husband Dave Halpern; nephews Bob and Don Klein and their wives Joanne and Dodie; great nephews Dylan, Lucas and Jesse Klein, Todd Kullen, Robert, Michael and Daniel Halpern; great niece Allison Chase; grandchildren Michael and Noam Rosen Grace; Marley Van Deusen, and Jacob and Jeremy Harden; cousins, extended family members and cherished friends.

## Reflections on Holding Each Other in the Light

**On January 31, 2010, interested persons at Strawberry Creek Meeting gathered in worship to speak to the queries:**

- **What does the expression “holding in the Light” mean to you?**
- **What do you think others in the Meeting are asking from you when a request is made for us to hold someone in the Light?**

Pacific Yearly Meeting Faith & Practice (2001) Glossary – “to hold in the Light”:  
To desire that divine guidance and healing will be present to an individual who is in distress or faces a difficult situation, also, to give prayerful consideration to an idea.

WHAT DOES THE EXPRESSION “HOLDING IN THE LIGHT” MEAN TO YOU?

To be held in God’s grace, to call for the best in one’s self.

Before we can hold someone in the Light, we must center ourselves, and come into contact with the Divine, the Life Force. Opening to Love, to Light, to Kairos, is a blessing that makes all things possible, beyond any expectation we may have.

To establish a sense of connection between God within and God without. A calling forth of the person named, which may evoke an intense powerful sense of the life force. Other times it is difficult for me to feel anything.

To hold someone in the Light is to surround them with human and Divine love/the Life Force/Creative Energy, and to sustain that consciousness. To hold someone in the Light is to bear witness, as if I were saying, “I am here with you, I witness who and where you are.” Empathy and compassion rise up; energy and attention are focused. We reinforce the person’s strength and courage.

The moment the request is made seems like the most powerful opportunity to engage. Responding causes forces of the energies/chakras to penetrate the layers/auras of our physical fields.

There seems to be some kind of light, energy, and focus when we are holding someone in the Light. If I know the person named, their face will come to mind. If I don’t know the person, I usually need some kind of information about the situation to really engage and relate. Have you noticed how when you are reading the newspaper, a cat knows where on the whole big page your eyes are focused to read, and will sit on exactly that spot on the page! It knows where the “beam of your focus” is. Holding in the light is a way of focusing your attention, to invoke your empathy, sympathy, and compassion. I don’t believe I have to “feel” compassionate in order for the practice to contribute to their healing.

To hold in the light for healing doesn’t necessarily mean physical healing of the ailment, but can mean healing of the wounded soul.

Sometimes I make a practice to hold in the light someone who “did me dirt.” If I hold them in the light I don’t have to carry around an obligation to right the wrong.

Other faith traditions say “I’ll pray for you” but the phrase “hold in the light” is the Quaker way of doing it, of “being with” or accompanying someone at a time of difficulty. We are often in a place where we ourselves could benefit from love and compassion when we are making a request on behalf of someone else. There are parallels to the Eastern sutra teaching to send loving kindness. Holding someone/something in the light is not necessarily meant to change the other, but the practice of doing it changes oneself. If I tell someone I will hold them in the light, I turn my attention so that I am with them in spirit more frequently than otherwise.

When I hold a problem in the light I am sometimes asking for a heart opening, to show I’m on the right path, to make sure I’ve “checked in”, to be changed myself, especially if I’m feeling frustrated. I want to see if there’s some action I need to take as part of a process – I may be being called to open my eyes and see something on my own path.

For me holding someone in the light is different every time it happens. It can be a call for wonderful love when thinking of the person, or a letting go of judgments and just being with the person. It’s a recognition that we’re all one although we’re not usually in touch with that truth. It’s a wake up call to get out of my head and thoughts, and join with others.

This phrase brings up the difficulties and problem we always have when trying to talk about the Divine, which is a huge mystery we get glimpses and shadows of. I may not be able to join in what feels like an effort to repair. Sometimes I even feel a drawing back. In the same way as I do when listening to vocal ministries during the worship hour, when asked to hold someone in the light I ask myself, “Is this request meant for me?” I find the way, and it is never the same, not fixed but always new.

For me there are different kinds of holding in the light. It may be a simple request related to a health issue someone is facing, then I’m just open and directing positive energy. Other times there is something powerful in the room – the speaker is visibly moved, in turmoil, and my response is to open wide. Sometimes as I am sitting in worship, others walk into the room and I’m not centered so I look around and hold each person so we can go deeper into worship.

What happened in our worship hour this morning illustrated our Meeting’s ability to hold someone in the Light. A distraught unknown woman came into our worship gathering and spoke aloud her concerns, then abruptly left. After she departed the room, there was a call for her to be ministered to and three friends left the meeting to find her. Meanwhile, the Meeting held her in the light. Sometimes “holding in the Light” just seems like a “pretty phrase” and other times it conveys a profound power and depth.

When I became acquainted with Friends, I wondered if the phrase “holding in the light” was their version of praying. I don’t believe in a personal deity that makes this one person better, but leaves others to suffer.

When I hear a request I open up to transition from my head and giving advice, and instead myself turn around so I am in a receiving mode and asking how can I be used by God. I remember it’s been said “When Bonnie Tinker holds you in the light, its not a touchy feel-y warm glow, it is a call to be clear and available.”

To feel connected I need a picture in my mind, or at least a name. The connection is not like shaking someone’s hand. The Divine in me connects with the Divine in them. There’s a transfer of energy, a “push in the right direction.” It’s an affirmation of who they are. Sometimes I visualize a clearing in a wooded area—blue sky light overhead. I don’t think of the phrase “hold in the light” as being a spotlight on the stage, but more like clearness and focus in the presence of sunlight. Sometimes its not a message for me; on the other hand sometimes two hours later, something will unexpectedly come to me.

WHAT DO YOU THINK OTHERS IN THE MEETING ARE ASKING FROM YOU WHEN A REQUEST IS MADE FOR US TO HOLD SOMEONE IN THE LIGHT?

On one level I am aware of a huge need. One friend said he didn’t feel a sense of responsibility but I do feel responsible when I hear about another’s problems. As a witness to someone else’s need, I feel a responsibility to do something and at the same time it may be more than I can do. This creates a tension in me. I have a sense of caution that it is too much for me to hold someone in the light. I’m glad that others are not so scared and are able to respond to a request.

Are we being asked for warm fuzzies or for the kind of clearness that strips away maya/illusion ~ all that is superfluous is burned away in the fire. To be held by God is not necessarily simple. We are not scattered into pieces, but held intact. While in the crucible you are fired in the kiln but not shattered.

When someone makes a request to be held in the light, they are asking us to help carry the pain/suffering.

When asked to hold in the light someone we don’t know, it’s a request that the speaker can’t do it alone. When my mother had fallen and she was staying home to rest, she was very receptive to any positive energy that was sent her way, and it was obvious she was being held in the light. Multiple thoughts added up or perhaps some people have the power to minister. It made a palpable difference.

Holding in the light is discernment. As the listener, we must discern what they are asking/needing.

It’s important not to program a time to have people make requests to hold in the light. Just let it happen.

Different things come up. When the request to hold in the light is made as we're going around the room, it doesn't feel like it's the right time. We don't have time to create a space that we're really holding someone in the light. On the other hand, our whole meeting opened up when someone asked to be held in the light because she was depressed. Even if no specific request to be held in the light is made, during the worship hour we are holding each other in the light ~ that's the power of being in community.

As we circle here and give attention to the questions, we are creating a sense of presence of the sacred. That presence is strengthened in each of us whenever we are gathered as now. Fellowship in the presence of the Sacred – allows for opening, freedom, movement.

There are two different things happening. One is a personal appeal for Spirit to act. The other is asking the meeting to hold the person, which works best when it's a gathered meeting, that's when it's most powerful.

As I've listened to everyone speak today, I am struck by how much similarity there is in our responses. Its like hearing bells peal in unison with a beautiful sound.

When I am asked to hold another in the light, I feel the energy of the requester at a "gut level", I feel the central struggle. I seek to reinforce the requester's faith. I don't know how it works.

Some things seem like a mystery, and then one day you understand. When I first started attending Quaker meetings, I couldn't figure out how Quakers knew the Meeting had ended. I didn't know that the Closer started the handshakes ~ it would just seem like all of a sudden everyone in the Meeting somehow knew the meeting was over and the "secret handshakes" would begin!

I'm not sure what I think, but I often ask to have my friends held in the light. I know it has helped me, and maybe it has also helped my friends.

The practice of asking others to hold you or someone else in the light has to be a different experience in a small meeting than it is in a large meeting like ours. When there are only ten it seems easier to allow requests, but when there are one hundred people it's much more difficult.

## Worship and Ministry Committee Report on Joys and Sorrows

Meeting for Business, February 8, 2009

The idea for having a time to share joys and sorrows was brought up at W&M over a year ago. We were responding to a hunger in Strawberry Creek Meeting for a deep and centered Meeting for Worship. We noticed that there were some offerings during our time together on First Day, either during the Worship hour or during announcements, that seemed to be an expression of personal need, for prayer, practical assistance, or attention, rather than spirit-led ministry.

As this was discussed it was brought to our attention that the practice of “Joys and Sorrows” was common in many east coast meetings and that the practice was of value to those meetings. We hoped to deepen worship by encouraging these personal communications and requests to migrate from the Worship hour. We were also searching for a way to build community, in an ever growing meeting, as well as a space for the meeting to hold those in the light who were experiencing personal deeply-felt events in their individual lives.

After our intention to introduce Joys and Sorrows was announced in both Meetings for Business and in announcements at rise of meeting, in June 2008 Worship & Ministry began a trial period of Joys and Sorrows to give the Meeting an opportunity to experience this practice and discern whether the practice should be continued. In the last eight months, our committee has actively engaged with our Meeting community, seeking both committee and individual responses to this new practice. On September 2<sup>nd</sup> members of three committees met to discuss a process by which our meeting would consider Joys and Sorrows. Those three committees were Worship & Ministry, Care of the Meeting and Mutual Care.

This three committee workgroup concluded in September 2008 that more time was needed for the Meeting to experience Joys and Sorrows (and that the practice should be extended at least another three months for consideration), and it concluded that Worship & Ministry was the appropriate committee to assess whether the practice served the Meeting, with a report out to Meeting for Business. The three committee workgroup indicated that one benefit of taking more time to assess Joys and Sorrows was that it believed steps could and should be taken to enhance the quality of sharings during Joys and Sorrows, such as providing a better scripted introduction to Joys and Sorrows that more clearly described context and expectations. Additional structure in the form of a ten minute time limit was adopted in support of First Day School needs.

Finally, the three committee workgroup encouraged Worship & Ministry to actively seek responses from Meeting about this new practice. Directing Friends to share their comments with members of the Worship & Ministry Committee was considered the better format (as opposed to a Listening Meeting).

During the next months Worship & Ministry invited feedback from the Meeting, through the SCM newsletter, at rise of meeting announcements, at Business Meetings, and by

receiving and initiating discussion with many many individuals. At the November 2008 Meeting for Business, Worship & Ministry indicated that its committee had not yet reached unity on the practice of Joys and Sorrows, and that it intended to return to Meeting for Business by March 2009.

We have heard from many of you about how you feel Joys and Sorrows affects (positively or negatively) your individual spiritual well-being, and the spiritual and community life of the Meeting. We would like Meeting to know that many different points of view were represented, both in the comments we received from others, and within the committee itself.

**We would like at this time to report that our committee, holding the Meeting in prayer and the light, has considered the question “Does the practice of Joys and Sorrows deepen the worship of Strawberry Creek Meeting?” and has reached unity to, at the beginning of March, cease the practice of Joys and Sorrows.**

Our unity on this is based on the following understandings:

As the Worship & Ministry Committee we are specially charged to tend and nurture the sacred worship space of the Meeting.

As Friends, we come together as a community bound primarily by our shared spiritual values, one of which is to care for each other. We value community-building and believe it can contribute to the deepening of worship for a gathered meeting. Indeed, community is one of our testimonies. In particular we note that the increasing size of our Meeting has stirred a deep hunger to actively work to sustain personal connection in a way that most naturally flows from knowing more about each other individually. Many, especially newcomers to the Meeting, have welcomed the practice of Joys and Sorrows. In ceasing the practice of Joys and Sorrows, Worship & Ministry Committee wants to clearly affirm its commitment to work with other committees to continue to seek ways that Strawberry Creek Meeting can respond to Meeting’s hunger for deeper community.

There are many good and valuable practices. The question is not the worth or value of a practice in the abstract, but rather the contribution and impact made by a practice in its actual implementation, taking into account the current state and maturity of the Meeting, timing, and Meeting priorities.

Given the current state of our Meeting it is not clear that the practice of Joys and Sorrows enhances and supports our Meeting’s ability to deeply gather during worship and to thereafter take this attitude of worship out into the world. We are concerned that Joys and Sorrows as currently implemented is taking our attention away from our more core commitment to the sacred worship space of the Meeting. We are increasingly concerned that the quality of our worship at this time is not serving the Meeting as well as Spirit desires. From many directions our committee is receiving the message that there is a real and urgent hunger in our meeting (and in the Quaker community nationally) for greater spiritual sustenance.

As humans we are asked to balance the many needs that call for our attention. Sometimes we must make choices based not on a lack of worthiness, but on our own limitations to tend to all that is worthy.

Worship & Ministry believes that at this time our Meeting's highest need, and our committee's greatest responsibility, is to tend and nurture the sacred worship space, and that our fulfilling this responsibility precludes continuing Joys and Sorrows in its present form. Worship & Ministry looks forward to the possibility that way may open in the near future for individuals in our Meeting to be given a venue for sharing important personal events in their lives.

We would like to thank the Meeting for its openness to trying a new practice. It is this flexibility to experiment, to learn, to discover failings and limitations, that enables us to trust the Spirit will continue to lead us in finding the path that is right for our Meeting.

## Supporting Individual Spiritual Ministries

**John Woolman “On Ministry” (1772)** : *“I have gone forward, not as one travelling in a road cast up, and well prepared, but as a man walking through a miry place, in which are stones here and there, safe to step on; but so situated that one step being taken, time is necessary to see where to step next.”*

### **Four traditional requirements for Quaker ministry:**

- **Inward transformation:** a reorientation of will and intention away from self and toward the guidance of the Spirit
- **Outward life:** a visible integrity of life that bears witness to the inward transformation
- **Discernment:** a growing ability, fostered through reflection and the support of elders, to discern an inward motion from a mere notion, “so that ministry comes from the Spirit rather than from some other source”
- **And usually a “competency”,** a means of employment that made it financially possible to leave home for long periods of time.

William Taber, Jr., Introduction to Samuel Bownas, “A Description of the Qualifications Necessary to a Gospel Minister”, Philadelphia: Pendle Hill Publications and Tract Association of Friends (1989, from the 1767 edition).

In some few cases there is a need or desire on the part of the member to have formal recognition or support from the meeting in pursuing a specific ministry or religious service. In these cases **the meeting not only must assist the member in achieving clearness about his or her leading, but also must enter into a process of discerning the meeting's appropriate role...** [*Responding to Calls to Ministry: Central Philadelphia Monthly Meeting (1995)*, see <http://www.nyym.org/leadings/PYM.htm> ]

### **An individual may ask Meeting to recognize his/her ministry by**

- (1) Establishing an Anchoring/Oversight Committee,**
- (2) Recording a Minute,**
- (3) Providing Financial Assistance, and/or**
- (4) Identifying Ministry as “on behalf of” Meeting**

### **Clearness Committee for a Ministry-Related Issue**

[*Responding to Calls to Ministry: Central Philadelphia Monthly Meeting (1995)*]

The clearness committee is a major tool of the meeting for business in discerning the strength and validity of a leading that has arisen out of the spiritual life.

How to request a clearness committee: A person seeking the meeting's support for a call to ministry should write a brief letter to the meeting, in care of the clerk, requesting the appointment of a clearness committee. It should spell out the nature of the call or concern, the degree of clarity already reached, the length of time the activity is expected to last (with starting and ending dates if relevant), and the nature of the desired support or involvement of the meeting, including any financial support that may be needed.

Creating a clearness committee: The process by which committees nominate members of clearness committees is up to the committee. The person nominated need not be a member of the committee making the nomination, but should be a person who would be aware of the concerns that committee might have in discerning the meeting's relationship to the proposed ministry. Persons nominated for a clearness committee should have demonstrated a gift of discernment and a willingness to enter into the discipline of prayerfully seeking the leading of the Spirit.

Responsibilities of the clearness committee: The clearness committee will usually meet one to three times, or as needed to come to clarity. **The clearness committee has two responsibilities: assisting the individual in seeking clearness and discerning the meeting's appropriate role.** Below are suggestions of issues to reflect on in seeking clearness. Clearness, however, is not found in the correct answers to a set questions, but in the collective sense of having discerned the Leading of the Spirit.

### *Assisting the individual seeking clearness*

The clearness committee will initially undertake to assist the person seeking clearness prayerfully to clarify God's call. The following queries may be helpful in that process:

- *The nature of the call:* What is its nature? How has the person come to feel that she or he is being called to this service? How does this call fit into his or her personal and spiritual life?
- *Potential benefits of the proposed ministry:* What are the potential benefits to the person's spiritual development? What are the potential benefits to the life of the meeting? What are the potential benefits to the wider community?
- *Readiness to undertake the ministry:* Is the person prepared to undertake this ministry at this time: How does it fit in to other obligations such as family, work, or community? Does the person have the skills and resources to carry out this call? What steps might be taken to become better prepared for undertaking the ministry? What are the risks and how will they be borne?
- *Financial readiness:* How will the person support him- or herself while carrying out this ministry? Is she or he prepared to go forward even if the level of funds available may require living on significantly reduced means?
- *Rightness of seeking support:* Is it appropriate to ask others to join in this ministry by providing practical or financial support? (Sometimes there may be clearness that this is something the individual is called to bear him- or herself) Should the ministry proceed even if others do not feel called to provide support? Is the person prepared to engage prayerfully with others in the meeting without resentment and disruption of his or her relationship to the meeting community?

### *Discerning the meeting's role*

If the individual has become clear that she or he is called to a particular ministry and is seeking recognition or support from the meeting, the clearness committee moves on to assist the meeting in discerning our role in relationship to this ministry by preparing recommendations based on the following guidelines.

It is the meeting's responsibility to discern whether and in what ways we are led to support a ministry. Faith and Practice points out that concerns should be regarded as primarily matters of individual responsibility. It should not be taken for granted that because an individual is called to a specific ministry that other members, or the meeting corporately, are necessarily called to involvement in that ministry. The following queries may be helpful in discerning the course of action that is appropriate for the meeting:

Is it a concern with which the meeting can unite? Is it grounded in Friends beliefs and practices?

Would it be beneficial to the person undertaking the ministry or to the ministry itself for the meeting to play a role? Would it benefit the life of the meeting to be involved with this ministry?

Is the proposed action well focused on the concern? Is the method of responding to the call one in which the meeting has confidence? How would this ministry relate to others addressing this concern?

Are the costs in terms of time, energy, money, and other resources reasonable? Is there a well developed budget for the ministry? Has care been taken to be thorough in predicting expenses and identifying sources of funds? Is the person prepared to bear part or all of the costs of the ministry? Is she or he prepared to live on reduced means while carrying out the ministry? Are the recipients of the service able to cover all or part of the cost of the ministry?

Are there sources of spiritual, practical, and financial support outside the meeting? What would be the meeting's relationship with those sources? Are there other sources available for funding this ministry, e.g., Pemberton Fund, supporters of the activity outside Central Philadelphia Monthly Meeting, etc.? [As a general rule, solicitations to these sources should be in the name of the individual with the meeting's support rather than in the name of the meeting. A solicitation to a specific source may be made in the meeting's name at the recommendation of the clearness or oversight committee and with approval of the meeting for business. Solicitations in the name of the meeting should be signed by the clerk of the meeting.]

After the above sources are accounted for, what level of funding from the meeting does the clearness committee think is appropriate? Are the resources asked of the meeting available and/or is the concern sufficiently important to the meeting for us to dig deep to find the resources? Is the level of available funding adequate to meet at least the minimal

needs of the ministry and the minister? If all of these sources total less than the anticipated need, what implication does this have for clearness to proceed?

Some ministries may need or desire practical support in order to move forward. Would a working committee or committees be useful or even necessary in the right ordering of the ministry? ... **A working committee is chosen by and responsible to the minister** in assisting her or him in carrying forward the work of the ministry. Its members may or may not be members of the meeting. **It is not formally a structure of the meeting and does not report to the meeting.**

### *Report of the Clearness Committee*

After careful reflection on the meeting's right response to the proposed ministry the clearness committee is asked to develop recommendations. Options might include:

- Discourage the Friend from undertaking the action
- Encourage the Friend to go forward if she or he feels clear, but recommend no active role for the meeting
- Endorse the action as one supported by the meeting with an appropriate minute from the meeting.
- Provide financial support
- Adopt the project as a meeting project
- Other recommendations as the clearness committee is led.

At the conclusion of the clearness process the committee will write a report, which should include:

1. Description of the call and of the request
2. Clarity in the individual as to the nature and genuineness of the call
3. Clarity as to timeliness of the call: is now the time for this person to undertake this ministry?
4. Recommendation regarding the meeting's relationship to the ministry
5. Recommended actions of the meeting, such as:
  - wording of a minute, often called a minute for religious service
  - names of those undertaking spiritual or practical support
  - duration of the ministry if it is viewed as time limited; if it is not viewed as time limited, time when clearness will be reviewed
  - recommendation regarding financial support from the meeting
  - recommendation of persons for the anchoring/oversight committee.

## Anchoring/Oversight Committee for Public Ministry [aka Religious Service]

*[anonymous]*

Friends have a long tradition of supporting individuals from Monthly Meetings who are called to a public ministry. Public ministry is Spirit-led ministry that leads to acting on one's gifts outside of the Monthly Meeting – in the larger Quaker community or in a public arena. It may involve spiritual, physical, and/or financial burdens or risk. Historical examples are Margaret Fry, who did prison reform work, and John Woolman, whose public ministry contributed to the abolition of slavery.

While we are all called to be ministers in our vocations and actions, public ministry is unique. At best, it is carrying out important work on behalf of the Meeting and the entire Society of Friends. In any case, it is grounded in our testimonies. A long-term [ministry] committee spiritually supports, guides, and holds an individual accountable. The committee may help the individual address challenging questions, such as:

**Am I being faithful in this ministry?**

**Am I yielding to Spirit, or to ego?**

**Am I running ahead or lagging behind the Inner Guide?**

**Is my leading still true, or has it shifted?**

As with other clearness committees, the purpose of a [ministry] is to serve as a channel of Divine guidance and support. It is a way of grounding public ministry in community and providing an element of spiritual accountability. The committee may offer practical suggestions, but that is not its main function...

*[Responding to Calls to Ministry: Central Philadelphia Monthly Meeting (1995)]*

An anchoring/oversight committees will have three to five members... The anchoring/oversight committee should meet with the minister on a regular basis, perhaps as frequently as monthly and no less than quarterly, to review the concerns listed above.

**It is not the role of the anchoring/oversight committee to join in carrying out the ministry or developing funds or other resources.** It has been the experience of oversight committees that they are better able to carry out their discernment function if they are not responsible for the day-to-day work of the ministry.

Recommendations for continuation, laying down, or changing the form of the ministry may come at any time in the life of the ministry. At minimum, continuation of the ministry should be reviewed annually.

## **A Meeting Minute to Recognize an Individual's Ministry**

*[Chestnut Hill Friends Meeting: Report of the Ad-Hoc Committee on Recognizing and Supporting Ministries (November 2004)]*

Historically, there has been a tension in the Society of Friends between the concept of recognizing individuals as ministers and the Friend's belief that each of us has a direct connection to God. In recent times Friends monthly meetings within the Friends General Conference have generally moved away from the practice of recording ministers, but have continued to value the practice of issuing minutes of religious service for individual Friends who are traveling in support of an important cause or to nurture the religious life of Friends, meetings, or other groups. During at least the past 30 years this practice has been extended by some Friends meetings to include the recognition of ministries which might or might not involve travel, but which are also intended to support important causes or to nurture religious life either within or outside of the Society of Friends. For the past ten years our Meeting has been engaged in this practice, and as we have found it to be a valued practice, this document is intended to set forth guidelines to encourage and regularize the process for the future.

Any Friend may be called to a ministry, but very few of these ministries require minutes of religious service. For example, for some a ministry may consist of raising children in a Quaker fashion, or living life as simply as possible. For others, it may involve engaging in a series of acts of civil disobedience, or running a business according to Quaker principles. All these may be ministries of great importance, regardless of whether they require minutes of religious service, for they all may contribute in vital ways to the life of the Meeting and the transformation of our lives.

A ministry is a call to religious service that deepens the spiritual life of those involved in it. A ministry may arise, be lively and vital for a time, and come to an end. As a faith community, we seek to grow in our experience of the Divine Presence and its call to service in each of our lives. We seek to help one and another lead faithful lives, and at times we have found that minutes of religious service are helpful in this process.

Minutes of religious service record the Meeting's recognition of a call to a religious service in someone's life. **A minute of religious service may be appropriate in the following situations: (1) When a Friend feels led to devote him or herself to a Quaker concern and would benefit from the spiritual care and oversight, and in some cases, financial support, of the Meeting in carrying forth the concern, (2) When a Friend feels led to action which requires her or him to carry a concern to other meetings or non-Friend communities, (3) When a Friend feels led to a specific pastoral role such as a prison ministry or hospice chaplaincy which requires a recognition by his or her faith community, or (4) When the Meeting unites behind a concern and wishes to designate a Meeting member or attender to carry out the concern [ministry "on behalf of" the Meeting].**

### **A Ministry “on behalf of” the Meeting**

There may be times when an individual’s public ministry inspires the entire Meeting to take a larger than usual role in supporting an individual’s public ministry and it becomes a ministry of the Meeting as a whole. *[anonymous]*

A decision to recognize a ministry as “on behalf of” the Meeting must be made by Meeting for Business (usually pursuant to a recommendation from Worship and Ministry Committee).

*[Responding to Calls to Ministry: Central Philadelphia Monthly Meeting (1995)]*

Clearness for the meeting to support a ministry is not simple agreement or consensus. It is not enough that a proposed ministry be reasonable or a good idea. We must seek a sense of that deep, interior unity which is a sign that the members are consciously gathered together in God. When this unity is found within the meeting, the ministry is carried out with the united strength of the gathered meeting...

Some queries for individuals to keep in mind in considering support of a ministry [on behalf of Meeting]:

- 1) Can I unite with supporting this ministry? Will it do a work of importance for our world? Do I see its importance to the spiritual life of the minister? Will it benefit my spiritual life or that of the meeting to support this work?
- 2) Do I feel called to participate in this ministry by providing spiritual, practical or financial support? If I do not feel called to support this ministry does it represent reservations about the ministry that should be raised with the meeting? Am I called elsewhere? Am I resisting God's call?
- 3) Am I able to support this special project, financially and practically, while continuing to fulfill my obligation to serve on meeting committees and to contribute to the meeting's budget? Is the meeting in a position to fulfill a commitment to supporting this ministry without sacrificing other important commitments?

### **When a Friend’s Ministry involves Traveling**

Clearness and Anchoring Committees of Friends General Conference (3/2005)

[http://www.fgcquaker.org/traveling/clearness\\_anchoring\\_committees.html](http://www.fgcquaker.org/traveling/clearness_anchoring_committees.html)

# Strawberry Creek Meeting's TRAVELING MINISTRY FUND

## Traveling Ministries Support Fund Guidelines (9/14/08)

### **Background**

There is a long-standing Quaker tradition of traveling ministry, both among Friends and publicly for social causes. In this tradition, meetings who support the ministry and the minister have provided financial as well as other kinds of support. Until this time, Strawberry Creek Monthly Meeting has not had a fund for this purpose. We would like to support the flowering of ministry within our Meeting and share our testimonies through ministry in the world.

### **Purpose of the Fund**

The purpose of the fund is to provide at least some support to Friends engaged in a traveling ministry that meets the criteria set out below. In some instances a ministry is considered so central to the core values of the Meeting that the Meeting will decide not only to provide some support for the ministry, but will consider the ministry as being accomplished on behalf of the Meeting. Receiving approval for funds does not mean the particular ministry is being done "on behalf of" the Meeting (a designation requiring a minute from the Meeting).

### **Criteria for reviewing requests for funding of traveling ministry**

- 1) Recommendation of Friend's Clearness/Anchoring Committee: The Friend should have a Clearness or Anchoring Committee that, among other tasks, assesses the ministry for its faithfulness and viability. Ordinarily it is expected that Friend's Clearness/Anchoring committee has recommended that Worship and Ministry be asked for the funds to support Friend's ministry.
- 2) Relationship w/SCMM: Ministers should be members of SCMM, or another Friends' Meeting, or in rare cases, long-time SCMM attenders.
- 3) Purpose of Ministry: Priority is given to Quaker-related ministries, and when appropriate to ministries that reach beyond Quakers to further values related to our testimonies. Because the focus of ministry is on service rather than personal development, programs that charge participants a fee (e.g., conferences, travel study, educational course credits, etc.) are rarely eligible for funding as a traveling ministry. Note: resources may be available from the Meeting scholarship fund for such programs.
- 4) Timeliness of Request: Requests for funds should be made to Worship and Ministry Committee sufficiently prior to travel to allow adequate time for reflection, discernment, and recommendation from Friend's Clearness/Anchoring Committee. A sense of urgency may be a sign of a plan that has not yet been fully developed in prayer; though it may occasionally be a wonderful synchronicity of long-held leading and opportunity.

- 5) Amount of Funding: Worship and Ministry Committee will seek unity on the particular amount from the fund to be used for support of this ministry. Funds offered will not typically exceed half of the anticipated expenses of the ministry, including transportation, housing, and other needs. In most cases the funding will \$300 or less.
- 6) Past Requests: Recipients will not typically be eligible to receive funds more often than twice per year, and preference may be given to those not previously funded.
- 7) Ecological Footprint: When planning the ministry (especially travel), recipients are encouraged to wisely balance factors such as impact on the earth's resources and time/cost efficiencies. We encourage carbon offsets when applicable.
- 8) Ministry While Traveling: this fund is intended as a resource for those whose ministry requires travel, which ordinarily is understood to mean the ministry necessitates one or more nights be spent away from home.

### **Funding Process**

- 1) Friends should apply to Worship and Ministry in writing, stating a background of the ministry, its evolution, overall financial needs and other sources of support, the ministry's contribution to SCMM, the larger Quaker community and the world, etc.
- 2) Consultation as early as possible with the clerk of W & M is advised, as Worship and Ministry encourages careful seasoning of a request for funding. Applicants should inquire of the clerk when the committee will be able to consider a request, which may be as long as three months. This fund is intended to contribute toward preparation and to supplement resources while traveling (not to retroactively reimburse for travel expenses incurred before the request is made).
- 3) Accountability by a recipient includes the following, as appropriate:
  - A brief report to Meeting for Business after the ministry is completed or annually in the case of an ongoing ministry.
  - An adult education session or evening meeting to share the ministry.
  - Sharing the endorsed travel minute, if there was one, in Meeting for Business upon return
  - Written accounting of money spent (copy to W&M, Finance Committee, and Treasurer)

## Traveling Ministry: Meeting's Process

Traveling Ministries Committee of Friends General Conference (3/2005)  
[http://www.fgcquaker.org/traveling/clearness\\_anchoring\\_committees.html](http://www.fgcquaker.org/traveling/clearness_anchoring_committees.html)

How might your meeting respond when a member considers service with the Traveling Ministries Program (TMP) of Friends General Conference?

God leads Friends to a traveling ministry in a number of ways. A call to travel may flow out of the individual's active ministry in the monthly meeting or local community. It may stem from experiences in the wider Quaker world. The call may be to specific work, to the cause of restorative justice, for example, or it may be more general, without a particularly defined task or topic. (Paraphrased from Jonathan Vogel-Borne, "Traveling in the Ministry," paper written for Friends Meeting at Cambridge, 1987.)

While ministry is the occupation of all who respond to God's call, Friends who travel in response to this call are under a particular challenge because of the public nature of their undertaking. When a Friend expresses an interest in traveling under the auspices of our program, the TMP seeks recommendations about the Friend from individuals in the home meeting and/or other Quaker bodies. Before the TMP sends someone to travel in the ministry, however, we – the TMP and the Friend who feels called to travel – also seek assistance from the Friend's local meeting as a corporate body.

The home meeting can assist, first, by appointing a clearness committee to help discern whether the Friend has a genuine leading from the Spirit. Should clearness be found, the Friend will then need an ongoing anchoring committee to help guide, nurture, and hold her accountable for the right use of the gifts given for this work. (If a Friend has already gone through a clearness process and has received a minute of travel from your meeting, you might want to skip down to the section on anchoring committees.)

It has been the practice for a Friend, who believes that she or he has heard a call, to bring the concern before the gathered community of Friends in the monthly meeting, that it may be tested as a true leading of the Spirit. The practice is an expression of our membership one of another, of a mutually accepted obligation, that of the individual Friend to test his or her concern against the counsel of the group and that of the group to seek the guidance of God in exercising judgment. It may bring enrichment both to the individual and to the group, even though the meeting may advise the Friend that he or she is mistaken. If the individual is encouraged to go forward, the prayers of Friends will strengthen him or her in the service.

--London Yearly Meeting, Church Government (1968, rev. 1980), #861, wording changed to be gender inclusive.

### Clearness to Travel in the Ministry

A Friend who feels led to travel in the ministry initiates a clearness process by writing a letter to the ministry and counsel committee (or its equivalent) of his or her local meeting, or to the clerk if the meeting has no such committee, describing the leading and asking

for a clearness committee. Procedures vary somewhat among meetings that already have a clearness process for Friends in this situation. Here are some general guidelines.

### Getting Started

The ministry and counsel committee (or monthly meeting for business) forms a clearness committee by naming three to five seasoned Friends who each possess gifts of spiritual discernment. Members should be people with whom the Friend considering travel in the ministry is comfortable, but who will be able to ask hard questions as needed. It is not appropriate to issue a general call for volunteers. If ministry and counsel cannot find enough suitable Friends from within the meeting to serve on the clearness committee, Friends from nearby meetings might be asked to serve. If the meeting is small and isolated, one or more individuals from local churches might be asked, while giving them a careful and clear explanation of Quaker process.

A clerk is named to convene the clearness meetings and make reports. It is also useful to appoint a recording clerk, who will write down key questions asked during the clearness session and at least some points of the responses.

### Discerning Clearness

The clearness committee and the Friend who has requested it work together to discern clearness to travel while focusing on several areas of inquiry. First, committee members need to learn about the leading itself and the spiritual life out of which it has arisen. The committee and the Friend must then consider whether the leading is merely a passing interest, an ego-driven concern, a true call from God, or some combination. Another essential focus of discernment is whether the Friend possesses the requisite seasoning – wisdom, humility, generosity of spirit, patience, and love – for travel in the ministry. The committee and the Friend also need to explore whether there are any impediments to the proposed travel at this time – personal or family concerns, business or community obligations, meeting responsibilities, or other Quaker commitments. The overriding goal of the clearness process is not to reach any particular outcome, but rather to discern whether there is clarity on these issues and if there is clarity, where it lies.

The clearness committee's first session begins with a substantial period of worship, inviting Divine guidance. Committee members proceed by asking the Friend open, loving, and challenging questions while maintaining an attitude of prayerful listening. Questions are most helpful when they are free of the assumptions or personal impediments of individual committee members. Committee members should also resist the impulse to give advice. Toward the end of the session the committee might shift into a declarative mode to allow Friends to mirror back what they have heard. It is appropriate to close the session with worship as Friends consider the ways in which they have been faithful to the promptings of the Spirit. More than one session might be required for all – the committee members and the Friend who feels led – to discern whether they are clear around the Friend's leading to travel in the ministry at this time.

## Forwarding a Recommendation

Should the clearness committee and the Friend reach unity in finding that the leading is genuine, that the Friend is seasoned for travel in the ministry, and that there are no impediments to travel at this time, the committee clerk will bring a recommendation to the ministry and counsel committee. It is helpful if the clearness committee sends a proposed minute to ministry and counsel including a succinct statement of the Friend's call, the purpose of travel, and the committee's findings, as well as its recommendation. This would be done not to presuppose the outcome, but to aid in the discernment process. If, after due consideration, ministry and counsel unites with the finding, the matter is forwarded to the next meeting for business. If the monthly meeting also unites with the finding, the clerk of the meeting will draft a travel minute briefly describing the traveler and the leading. Traditionally when a Friend planned to travel extensively in the ministry outside his or her quarterly or yearly meeting, the monthly meeting forwarded a copy of the travel minute to those meetings for their written concurrence. The TMP coordinator is available to help if a meeting has questions about drafting a travel minute. Her contact information is provided at the end of this paper.

Once the travel minute has been approved, the clearness committee is laid down. The traveler will bring a copy of the minute along on any assignment for TMP or other ministry outside the monthly meeting. It will be "endorsed" (comments written at the bottom of the page) by the clerk of any meeting visited. It is Quaker practice that these endorsements be read in the traveling Friend's own monthly meeting.

## Anchoring Committee

When a meeting formally recognizes a leading and issues a travel minute, it assumes responsibility for guiding the traveling Friend and enabling the ministry to be carried forward. The Friend in turn becomes accountable to the meeting for the right use of the gifts of this ministry. A number of meetings establish a committee, which the TMP calls the "anchoring committee," to provide the needed guidance, support, and accountability.

## Creating the Committee

The method of appointing an anchoring committee varies somewhat from meeting to meeting. What is important is that Friends follow a transparent, well-ordered procedure. The process outlined in "Getting Started" on page two for forming a clearness committee might also be used for an anchoring committee. One difference in the procedures for setting up these two committees is that a clearness committee is usually appointed by the ministry and counsel committee acting on its own, while in some meetings the clerk or the clearness committee may also be involved in appointing members of the anchoring committee.

Unlike the clearness committee, the work of an anchoring committee is ongoing and may continue for several years. With this in mind members are normally appointed for fixed periods with staggered terms to ensure continuity. Potential appointees need to be

informed that the guidance and support of traveling ministry is a weighty, ongoing responsibility.

### Frequency of Meetings

How often the anchoring committee meets depends on the traveling Friend's particular situation. Some receive just one or two invitations a year to travel in the ministry, perhaps to lead a workshop or facilitate a retreat. In such cases the anchoring committee might meet only once before and once after a visit. Other Friends travel frequently. In this situation the anchoring committee might need to meet at least once a month.

### Major Functions

An anchoring committee has several major functions:

- accountability of the traveling Friend for the right use of gifts, for carrying forward the leading;
- care and nurture of the traveling Friend as the leading is carried forward and when challenges arise; see "Roadblocks," below;
- guidance, particularly with respect to the challenges of ministry; see "Roadblocks," below;
- support, including help with home or family issues that interfere with the ministry, help interpreting the ministry to the meeting, and perhaps help in identifying or arranging financial support; see "Financial Support," below.

The specific tasks required to carry out these functions may differ as widely as the variety of leadings among Friends. While committee members keep a prayerful watch on the ministry, their work will be shaped in part by the nature of the individual's leading, the type and number of opportunities to travel, challenges encountered on the road, and the personal situation of the traveling Friend. The committee must see that the traveling Friend is faithfully exercising the gifts of ministry and at the same time also nurturing her own spiritual life.

### Process

Like the clearness committee, an anchoring committee session begins with silent worship as Friends seek Divine guidance. Out of the silence the traveling Friend will speak as led, sharing experiences and raising concerns. Committee members listen prayerfully and with open hearts, holding the speaker in the Light. The committee then proceeds by asking questions to help all present discern how the Spirit is at work through the traveling Friend.

Through careful listening and discernment, committee members may become aware of support, guidance, or nurture that may be needed to further the ministry. This might be something as simple as finding a person to drive the traveler to the airport or as challenging as helping the Friend discern the way through a conflict between the ministry

and a family responsibility. As far as possible committee members avoid telling the traveling Friend what to do. They rely instead on the Friend's ability to hear Divine guidance within while being supported by the deep listening love of the committee. Some anchoring committees include worship sharing in their meetings.

### Roadblocks

As it nurtures and supports the ministry, the anchoring committee must be alert to roadblocks that might interfere with the right exercise of the traveler's gifts. The committee will want to create an environment conducive to candid sharing. Friends who travel in the ministry have the same human failings we all possess. It is of great comfort to the traveling Friend to be able to share deeply his sense of instances when he felt he ran ahead of his guide or lagged behind. The committee will also need to be sure the ministry continues to be fueled by the traveler's relation with God, and not by her own ego. Guidance might be needed for an individual prone to accept more requests than can be conscientiously fulfilled. The committee will also need to watch for signs of burnout. Perhaps it is time for the Friend to stop traveling for a while and replenish his spiritual energy. For some, difficult personalities encountered during a retreat or a workshop can lessen the joy of traveling ministry. The committee might take this problem into prayer with the Friend to help discern a way forward.

### Revisiting Clearness

Should the traveler appear to lose spiritual grounding or develop new interests beyond the scope of the travel minute, an alert anchoring committee will raise a concern and if need be, help the Friend discern whether it is time to lay down the original leading or go back to the monthly meeting with an expanded or new leading. In this situation the anchoring committee assumes the function of a clearness committee.

### Other Tasks

During travel, committee members hold the Friend in the Light. Following a visit the traveler should be sure to give, in timely fashion, a copy of the travel minute endorsed by the clerk of the meeting or other Quaker body visited, to the clerk of the anchoring committee. (See the TMP page at [fgcquaker.org](http://fgcquaker.org) for a note on travel minutes and their endorsements.)

The committee has the following administrative responsibilities:

- to review the endorsements on the travel minute and make note of any concerns reflected in the comments;
- to maintain its own confidential records;
- to keep the monthly meeting informed about the traveler's work, including submitting a written report annually. The endorsements on the travel minute might be read in meeting for business. The traveler might also want to submit his or her own written report to the meeting.

In some meetings the annual report is given first to the monthly meeting ministry and counsel committee and then passed on to the meeting for business. If the quarterly and/or yearly meeting has concurred in the travel minute, a similar report should be passed on to those meetings.

### Financial Support

When travel is arranged through the TMP, the TMP and the meeting being visited cover transportation and hospitality costs. However, when travel opportunities arise that are not under the auspices of the TMP, the traveling Friend may encounter financial challenges. Some Friends who will miss work to travel may need additional financial support to make up the lost wages. The anchoring committee and the ministering Friend must be frank with each other about needs and expectations for financial assistance. When a meeting approves a travel minute for a member, it is endorsing that Friend's general ministry and therefore should also feel responsible for enabling it to go forward. In the past this was most often done by individual Friends quietly giving cash to the traveling Friend or helping the family that remained behind. In today's more complicated world of charitable tax deductions Friends tend to look to the meeting to supply financial support. If the Friend who travels is going to need such support, the meeting must be aware that this is part of its responsibility, and that there are tax issues that require consultation with someone knowledgeable about current law.

The home meeting can be enriched by news and insights from meetings the traveler has visited. As part of carrying out its responsibility to keep the meeting informed about the traveler's work, the anchoring committee might arrange occasions where the traveling Friend could speak to the meeting about experiences on the road. One meeting has found that "increased attention to calls to ministry has prompted members to be attentive to the movement of the Spirit in their own lives." (Central Philadelphia Monthly Meeting, "Responding to Calls to Ministry," Working Procedures Approved June 11, 1995 [rev. 1999].) Through mutual accountability and the sharing of Divine blessings, Friends build one another up in the faith and strengthen our treasured Quaker communities.