

A large, two-story white wooden building with a dark grey roof and a wide porch. The porch has white railings and columns. The building is set on a green lawn with trees in the background. The sky is clear and blue.

Faith and Practice

Illinois Yearly Meeting

of the

Religious Society of Friends

2020

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Book Information

Illinois Yearly Meeting, founded in 1875, is a spiritual community of Quakers, also known as the Religious Society of Friends. Individuals in this community attend some 22 affiliated local meetings across five states. Each summer the yearly meeting gathers in a retreat on its campus near McNabb, Illinois to worship together and to conduct the business of the community.

The text of *Faith and Practice: Illinois Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends* was approved by the Yearly Meeting in Sixth Month, 2019.

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ISBN: 978-1-7362466-0-3 (Paperback)

ISBN: 978-1-7362466-1-0 (Ebook)

Library of Congress Control Number: 2020923756

Concerning this Book of Faith and Practice

Early Quakers had a vivid sense of the Holy Spirit as an active presence, transforming themselves, their dealings with each other, and the entire world. They honored each person's direct access to the Light, yet were aware of the frailty of human judgment. Their response was to develop practices of communal listening, seeking, and discerning. Meeting for worship, meeting for business, and some more specialized practices were all developed to allow the group to clarify and support individual guidance and revelation. Today, Quakers continue to revise, refine, and hand on their characteristic practices of corporate listening and waiting, because these practices work.

The practical details of this corporate listening and waiting are of immediate concern to all Quakers. We have insisted on an open and freely shared ministry; as a result, the ongoing life of our meetings is shaped to an extraordinary degree by each meeting's members. Caring for ourselves and one another well—calling forth the Holy Seed effectively—requires (and elicits) very careful attention. Each situation is a fresh opportunity, yet our experimental approach has led to a body of experiential learning.

Quakers have naturally supported each other by sharing approaches that have worked well in the past: methods of listening, discerning, and acting that have reliably embodied our core leadings, especially in situations that recur again and again. A book of Faith and Practice records such shared learnings, brought together for the guidance of meetings and their members, and endorsed (in this case) by the yearly meeting. Books of Faith and Practice exist to coach monthly meetings and worship groups, individual members and attenders, in

how to care for themselves and each other in basic ways. Books of Faith and Practice have proven to be an effective means to convey our faith, inspiring and guiding expression of the Spirit's leadings.

This Faith and Practice is intended as a guide to Friends' characteristic practices, embodying the wisdom and experience of Illinois Yearly Meeting (ILYM) Friends. Not every detail of every practice described here will fit the real-life situation of every meeting or Friend. It would be unfaithful to insist that they be followed in preference to the Spirit's present guidance! Nevertheless, we have tried to assemble here descriptions of tested ways of doing things, practices it would be good to follow whenever practical, apart from unusual circumstances or special leadings. This Faith and Practice also includes perspectives on the spiritual meaning and underlying coherence of our current practices, often in the form of excerpts from Friends' writings. Glimpses of this deeper pattern can illumine our usual practices, and can guide improvisation in exceptional cases or new circumstances. These practices and perspectives have empowered our meetings to find unity and move forward in that unity—both unity with each other, and a deeper unity in and with the Holy Spirit.

Dearly beloved Friends, these things we do not lay upon you as a rule or form to walk by, but that all with a measure of the light which is pure and holy may be guided, and so in the light walking and abiding, these things may be fulfilled in the Spirit,—not from the letter, for the letter killeth, but the Spirit giveth life.

Postscript to an epistle from the meeting of elders, Balby, Yorkshire, England,
1656

A Brief Guide to Using this Book of Faith and Practice

As the name “Faith and Practice” suggests, this book is both a spiritual and a practical document. It articulates the historical and continuing faith of Friends; it also outlines recommended procedures regarding a wide variety of matters that local Quaker meetings are likely, and in many cases certain, to face.

A book of Faith and Practice serves as a resource guide for practical matters. Any individual or committee wishing to discover how Illinois Yearly Meeting Friends are expected or encouraged to handle a given issue—establishing clearness committees, handling requests for marriage under the care of the meeting, setting up a religious education program, or any other of the myriad of matters typically encountered by Quaker meetings—can expect to find help within these pages. The Table of Contents and the [Index of Search Terms](#) will inform Friends where they may learn more about any issue with which they are concerned. The [Glossary](#) offers definitions of many terms used by Quakers, including some that will likely be unfamiliar to newcomers to the Religious Society of Friends.

The Quaker religious service is discussed extensively in the next section, Meeting for Worship, which is followed by an account of the spiritual basis of Friends’ faith. Those sections are placed early in the book because the practical issues discussed afterwards are best understood within the framework of the religious beliefs and traditions that form the foundation of Quakerism. Therefore, while Friends are welcome to read this book piecemeal, in accordance with their specific needs and interests, its contents will be most appreciated by those who take the time to read these opening sections. A mere perusal of any particular section, while useful in

itself, will not provide as much depth and guidance as will a grasp of the principles and practices that inform the content of that section, indeed of the entire volume.

This Faith and Practice includes a rich selection of queries and quotations. Queries—questions intended to guide self-examination and spiritual discernment—are provided within most of the sections and many of the subsections. Quotations on a number of spiritual and practical matters are also included. Those quotations, authored by Quakers of varying races, sexes, ethnicities, and historical periods, have been carefully selected for their relevance to contemporary Illinois Yearly Meeting Friends. They are intended to be read and savored for advice, inspiration, and reflection.

As will be explained [elsewhere in this volume](#), this Faith and Practice represents the culmination of a process spanning almost three decades. It is the fond hope of Illinois Yearly Meeting that Friends will read it with care and find it enlightening and informative, and that it will serve the yearly meeting well.

Meeting for Worship

Friends in Illinois Yearly Meeting engage in “waiting worship,” in which we gather silently to enter into communion with God and with one another and to seek God’s help and guidance in ministering to our own spiritual needs, those of the meeting community, and those of the wider world. Meeting for worship begins when the first worshipper enters the room. As Friends enter the meeting room, they seek to still their minds, leaving behind the concerns and activities of their daily life, and to focus inward and enter a period of expectant waiting. After a substantial period of silence anyone present who feels led to speak by the Divine Spirit may rise and do so. Friends speak spontaneously as led rather than composing a message in advance of coming to meeting for worship. This vocal ministry is typically followed by a period of silence to deepen the worship and allow those present to take in what has been said. When enough time has passed another Friend may feel led to speak. Sometimes the entire meeting may pass in outward silence. The meeting ends with the shaking of hands.

Preparing for Meeting for Worship

Preparation for the next meeting for worship begins with the closing of the previous meeting. Friends seek God outside of meeting for worship by engaging in personal reflection, prayer or meditation, journaling, and reading the Bible or other spiritual literature. Friends who engage in such spiritual practices may more readily enter worship prepared in mind and spirit. Taking time from the busyness of life to experience even brief moments of awareness of

God's presence sows the seed for deeper spiritual engagement. Meetings are encouraged to provide opportunities for Friends to share the spiritual dimensions of their lives, by organizing retreats, workshops, spiritual nurture groups, or other gatherings.

While engaging in spiritual practices can prepare one to enter more readily and deeply into worship, so too can the things one does immediately prior to coming to meeting for worship. Allowing sufficient time to travel to the meeting place helps one arrive in a calm and unhurried state of mind. Parents may want to help their children prepare for the experience of worship or educational programs at meeting. Friends may hold the meeting in prayer, read the Bible or other spiritual literature, or simply quiet their minds and turn inward. Reading the newspaper, attending to media, or dealing with the stresses of secular life immediately before meeting for worship may distract one from spiritual matters and interfere with the capacity to perceive accurately the promptings of God's Spirit.

Beginning Meeting

So Friends, when you come together to wait upon God, come orderly...: the first that enters into the place of your meeting, be not careless, nor wander up and down, either in body or mind; but innocently sit down in some place, and turn in thy mind to the light, and wait upon God singly, as if none were present but the Lord; and here thou art strong. Then the next that comes in, let them in simplicity of heart, sit down and turn in to the same light, and wait in the Spirit: and so all the rest coming in...sit down in pure stillness and silence of all flesh, and wait in the light; a few that are thus gathered by the arm of the Lord into the unity of the Spirit,— this is a sweet and precious meeting, where all meet with the Lord!...In such a meeting, where the presence and power of God is felt, there will be an unwillingness to part asunder, being ready to say in yourselves, it is good to be here: and this is the end of all words and writings — to bring people to the eternal living Word.

Except in small meetings held in homes, worship begins once the first person enters the meeting space. As more Friends enter they do so silently, joining the worship. This practice allows others to enter already experiencing a sense of the living silence. After the meeting has settled into worship, a query or short passage may be read aloud by a designated individual.

Centering

As the meeting gathers into worship, we strive to release the events of the week and the stirrings of our minds, moving into an inward stillness where we unite with Friends in communal worship.

For some Friends the process of “centering,” of spontaneously emptying the mind and listening for the promptings of the Spirit, is difficult. Some have engaged in various practices to still their minds so that the Divine Presence can be felt, heard, and obeyed. The practices that work for one may not work for another; however, the practices that are described here have been found to be helpful in centering at the beginning of worship. Positioning the body in a restful yet alert position is a starting point. Many Friends sit with their feet on the floor and with hands in their lap. Some Friends keep their eyes open; others close them. Few people can achieve inward stillness immediately but find instead that they must release impediments gradually. Some pray; some hold each person in the room in the Light; some engage in self-examination; some contemplate mental images and others may silently repeat a passage. Through these means, one loses the complexity of thought, focuses inward, and enters a period of expectant waiting. The particular technique is less important than is the creation of a condition of being fully present. Even a few Friends who are centered can enable

others to more readily reach that state of consciousness as they remember that they are already in the presence of God. Those at a meeting for worship generally experience a deepening of the quality of the silence as the meeting settles.

When distractions occur during meeting for worship, individual Friends or the community as a whole may need to work to recenter on the movements of the Spirit. Distractions may take the form of outward disturbances or of unsettling thoughts or feelings. When dealing with distractions, it is helpful to turn back to a place of expectant waiting rather than trying to suppress the distracting thoughts.

Communal Worship

For when I came into the silent assemblies of God's people, I felt a secret power among them, which touched my heart, and as I gave way unto it, I found the evil weakening in me, and the good raised up, and so I became thus knit and united unto them, hungering more and more after the increase of this power and life...

Robert Barclay, 1676

As the worship deepens, those present open themselves as a faith community to the Spirit of God. We seek a direct relationship with God, to discern what God is calling us to do. We still our minds to open our understanding as freely as possible from the obscuring effects of our own rationalizations, emotions, and ego. The analytic mind gives way to an awareness of the workings of the Spirit. It is within this corporate experience that a sense of unity with those worshipping and with the Spirit is felt.

This discernment is a communal, collective process that differs in important ways from individual meditation. Some Friends find that reading or journaling can help them center or deepen their worship. However, such activities may have an isolating effect, diminishing participation in the communal character of our worship. All in attendance have a responsibility for the quality of worship, humbly listening together for how God is leading us.

Vocal Ministry

Whatever a man does or says or thinks in matters pertaining to divine worship must be done under the special impulse, inspiration, and influence of God... For, in order to perform true public worship properly, every worshipper ought to listen with the deepest quietness of mind to the internal strivings of the divine Spirit in his heart; so that as the Spirit prompts, leads, and assists he will either prophesy or pray or render thanks, or perform some other duty of divine worship. And in this way not only he but also the worship offered by him will be both pleasing to God and altogether beneficial to the worshipper himself and to the entire Church of God.

Robert Barclay, 1675

Any worshipper present in meeting may experience the influence of the Holy Spirit or Spirit of God leading them to speak. It is important when feeling led in this way to discern whether the call to speak is authentic. A rightly led message advances the spiritual life of the community and of its individual members. The speaker serves as an instrument through which the Spirit ministers; the message pulls others into the stream of the Living Waters, deepening the worship. There is no set procedure or inviolable rule for determining when or how to speak, but the following advices can be helpful:

- ✿ Friends speak as they are led to do so by the Divine Spirit. Friends often experience a call to speak as something that may be resisted but cannot be held back. A Friend who feels impelled to speak should do so. Some Friends find that the call to speak may be accompanied by trembling or a quickening of the heart.
- ✿ Often Friends do not have a well-formed message as they begin to speak but rather have a few words or phrases that may shift in focus as the ministry is being shared. This results from speaking spontaneously as led rather than crafting a message in advance. Friends are encouraged to speak even if the message is not fully composed.
- ✿ What one speaks in meeting for worship arises out of one's own experience. When speaking of spiritual matters, share based on what you know first-hand.
- ✿ Speak as ministry to the meeting rather than as therapy to yourself. Avoid focusing on your own personal or emotional needs.
- ✿ Ministry is of a religious or spiritual nature. While a religious life has political and intellectual consequences that may give rise to vocal ministry, messages are best delivered in a manner that emphasizes their spiritual grounding. Friends are tenderly cautioned to avoid giving messages that only promote a political agenda, rally people to a cause, or present an intellectual system of theology.
- ✿ Messages may continue a thread from ministry delivered by others earlier in a meeting. However, it is usually best to avoid responding directly to a previous message. Give other speakers the benefit of the doubt that they are speaking from a leading. If their contribution seems wrong to you, consider what there might be of value in it, rather than correcting or debating.
- ✿ An individual may discern an authentic message that is solely for them, not to be shared with the assembled body. That

Friend should rest in the knowledge that such messages are an invaluable part of the worship experience.

- ✿ Friends are tenderly advised to speak loudly and clearly enough to be understood. Except in very small meetings it is normal to rise when speaking in order to be heard.
- ✿ A period of silence traditionally follows vocal ministry. Others who wish to speak are urged to wait until the meeting has had time to absorb the previous message back into the silence.
- ✿ When many Friends offer vocal ministry with little silence between messages, a Friend may rise and remain silent as a way of enabling the meeting to re-experience waiting worship.
- ✿ An individual does not generally speak more than once in a given meeting for worship.
- ✿ Messages are best stated simply.

Some Friends engage in vocal ministry with some frequency; others find that they are seldom called to speak. Both those who engage in vocal ministry and those who do not are equally called to active participation in the meeting. Those who provide silent ministry help the meeting to reach or maintain a state of focused, attentive waiting on the presence of God.

The absence or presence of vocal ministry is not in itself a reflection of the quality of worship. Deep listening lies at the heart of Quaker worship. Entirely silent meetings can be the most powerful.

The Gathered Meeting

In the Quaker practice of group worship on the basis of silence come special times when an electric hush and solemnity and depth of power steals over the

worshippers. A blanket of divine covering comes over the room, and a quickening Presence pervades us, breaking down some part of the special privacy and isolation of our individual lives and blending our spirits with a super-individual Life and Power — an objective, dynamic Presence which enfolds us all, nourishes our souls, speaks glad, unutterable comfort within us, and quickens in us depths that had before been slumbering. The Burning Bush has been kindled in our midst, and we stand together on holy ground.

Thomas R. Kelly, 1940

When the presence of the Spirit is deeply experienced during a particular meeting for worship, the meeting is sometimes called a “gathered” or “covered” meeting. In a gathered meeting, one experiences a strong sense of being united with others and with God. The meeting may be silent, or Friends may deliver messages that parallel one’s own stream of thought or speak to a similar concern or question. Some Friends describe the experience of a gathered meeting as being “immersed in the Living Stream.” When leaving a gathered meeting, Friends often feel a deep sense of grounding and connection with God.

Closing Meeting

Ideally, meeting for worship ends when the assembled Friends collectively feel a sense of conclusion and release. While in present-day practice, the time of a meeting for worship is often scheduled for an hour, there may be times when there is a sense that worship needs to end earlier or continue longer. The [clerk of the meeting](#), a member of the [worship and ministry committee](#) or another similar committee, or some other designated person is given responsibility for discerning when the meeting is free to conclude and signals this by offering to shake hands with a nearby person. Others present then shake hands with those around them unless it is strongly felt that the meeting needs to continue.

There are several different practices that may follow the end of meeting for worship. In some meetings there is a time to express joys and sorrows, in others a time to make prayer requests. In larger meetings, a member of the worship and ministry committee or another similar committee will introduce herself or himself so that Friends who have concerns or questions may share them after the rise of meeting. Some meetings ask all those present to introduce themselves; others ask that newcomers or those who have been absent for a period of time introduce themselves to the body. As a final practice, most meetings allow time for announcements. In some meetings, these are given by the individual most involved in the activity or event to be shared; in others, announcements are provided to the clerk or other designated individual to read. Following announcements there is often a time for conversation and an opportunity to get to know newcomers. Taking this time is valuable for building a sense of community in the meeting.

Logistics

In many meetings, Friends gather for worship once a week on First Day (Sunday). A number of meetings also hold mid-week worship.

Some meetings hold worship in their own meetinghouses. Other meetings hold worship in a rented space, still others in their homes. The location should be carefully selected to avoid distractions which may make it hard to center. Regardless of the space in which meeting for worship occurs, the general layout of the room is similar: chairs or benches are arranged so that people are facing one another.

Someone may be designated to greet people as they arrive. Many meetings have pamphlets available for newcomers that briefly describe the form of Quaker worship. In some meetings, those arriving late enter the meeting room as soon as they arrive. In other meetings, there is a designated space where latecomers gather and begin to center, which serves to minimize disruptions to the

deepening silence. Then, at a designated time, often fifteen minutes into worship, they enter the meeting room. Even if this is not the practice of a particular meeting, latecomers should refrain from entering the meeting room while someone is offering vocal ministry.

Children are welcome to attend the entire meeting for worship. Often, children attend either the first fifteen minutes of meeting or the last fifteen minutes. Such decisions are made with consideration of the experience that the meeting seeks the children to have. As children mature, they are encouraged to participate in the entire meeting for worship.

Dealing with Problems in Meeting for Worship

The quality of worship is compromised if some worshippers feel that their vocal ministry, though Spirit-led, would not be welcome in meeting for worship. Meetings need to be aware when they are creating an environment that has the effect of discouraging some voices or perspectives. Individuals who feel silenced are encouraged to bring their concerns to the worship and ministry committee or its equivalent.

There are also times when the behavior of a particular individual interferes with the quality of worship. Sometimes a Friend may engage in frequent vocal ministry, the content, length or tone of which is disruptive. To address such situations, the worship and ministry or other similar committee should consider how to proceed. In making a determination as to how to respond to this person's behavior, consideration is given to the degree to which it affects the quality of worship. The meeting should take care to hold the disruptive worshipper in the Light and to treat them tenderly and with compassion. Meetings would also do well to consider how they would deal with an unexpected instance of disruptive behavior before one actually occurs. (See "[Worship and ministry committee](#)")

Queries

For the individual:

- * How do I prepare for meeting for worship?
- * Do I arrive at meeting on time?
- * Do I enter the meeting room in a manner which does not disturb the worship which has already begun?
- * Do I come to meeting neither determined to speak nor determined not to speak?
- * Do I wait to speak until I feel led?
- * When I feel led, do I speak? If not, what holds me back?
- * Do I listen with an open heart to the messages which are offered in worship?
- * How can meeting be a source of help when I feel disconnected from the Divine?
- * How do I carry the experience of meeting for worship into my daily life?

For the meeting as a whole:

- * What does our meeting do to increase the depth of meeting for worship?
- * Does the quality of vocal ministry in our meeting contribute to the quality of worship?
- * Do Friends in our meeting find that they are spiritually refreshed, enriched and sustained by meeting for worship?
- * How does the ministry nourish the spiritual growth of our meeting community?

✿ Is our meeting open to the diversity of messages that may arise as vocal ministry?

✿ Do Friends in our meeting feel safe to speak as led?

The Light Within and its Religious Implications

Deep within us all there is an amazing inner sanctuary of the soul, a holy place, a Divine Center, a speaking Voice, to which we may continuously return. Eternity is at our hearts, pressing upon our time-torn lives, warming us with intimations of an astounding destiny, calling us home unto Itself. Yielding to these persuasions, gladly committing ourselves in body and soul, utterly and completely, to the Light Within, is the beginning of true life.

Thomas R. Kelly, 1941

The Religious Society of Friends encompasses a wide variety of beliefs and perspectives, but perhaps the most distinctively Quaker religious concept is that of the *Light Within*. Also frequently called the “Spirit” or “that of God in everyone,” the Light is a Divine Presence within each of us: a manifestation of God in all people. Identified by early Friends as the living Spirit of Christ, the Light serves as a moral guide, a comfort in times of need, a spur to action, and the Seed from which inward spiritual transformation can grow.

Light is that which makes visible, and the first function of the Light Within is to make clear to us our true spiritual nature, laying bare what we may have hidden from ourselves, whether good or bad, and showing us ourselves as we really are. For some, this may mean seeing one’s true worth after years of imagined worthlessness; for others, it may mean recognizing for the first time one’s own capacity for evil. For all, gaining a more honest and complete understanding of oneself is a crucial step in spiritual growth.

...now friends deale plainly with yourselves, & let the eternall Light search you & trye you for the good of your soules, for this will deale plainly with you, it will rip you up & lye you open, & make all manifest which lodgeth in you...

Margaret Fell, 1656

By this light it hath pleased the Lord to_give me the distinction of things inwardly in my own_heart. The Lord hath shewn me by it evil and good_in my own heart, and taught me to chuse the good, and refuse the evil. So that as my eye hath been turned_to this light, and kept to this light, I have known_and walked in the way of life; for the power which_hath appeared in this light, hath created me anew,_made me a child of light, and taught and caused me_to walk in this light, as God is in the light.

Isaac Penington, 1679

The Light not only clarifies our own inward nature, but also helps us discern how to live our lives. The Light informs and excites the conscience, turning us away from what we know is wrong, and toward what is right and true and just. The Light is the source of authentic “concerns”—the persistent, growing sense we sometimes feel that some moral or spiritual issue requires our attention and discernment; and of authentic “leadings”—the sense that one is impelled by Divine will toward a particular course of action.

We can just let go and contemplate the painful reality as the Light reveals it to us, turning it slowly around the way a child holds a glittering pebble up in the light. In this more expansive, less judgmental state of consciousness we may gradually become aware of new dimensions, or causes, or outcomes of the problem as we continue to hold it in the Light.

William Taber, 1992

The Light can be unsettling but is ultimately a source of inward peace and comfort, both in the assurance it provides that God is always

with us, and in the clear conscience it brings to those who do what they know inwardly to be right. Friends have a special calling to build peace in the world; but true peace is rarely built by those who are dominated by turmoil in themselves. Those who would bring peace out to others must find it also within. It is by turning to this inward source of reconciliation and forgiveness that we find the foundation for outward action.

This I told them was their first step to peace, even to stand still in the light...

George Fox, recounting events of 1652

Discerning the Light

Attending to the Light Within requires effort, and a careful discernment of what in ourselves is truly of the Divine Spirit, and what instead is simply the expression of our own egos, desires, or assumptions. The Light endows all people with the capacity to perceive and act in accord with what God would have us do, but our exercise of that capacity is frequently imperfect.

The experience of Friends has been that the Light is most reliably recognized from a state of inward calm and quiet. It is for this reason that in our meetings for worship, including our business meetings, we try to empty our minds and put aside anything which might mask or distract us from our perception of the Light: the stresses and worries of daily life, the bitterness of resentment or anger, the diversion of idle fantasy, or whatever else might so fully occupy our thoughts as to crowd out what we most need to see. We should hesitate to accept as the Light's guidance any impulse which does not persist as these things are set aside.

Give over thine own willing; give over thine own running; give over thine own desiring to know or to be any thing, and sink down to the seed which God sows in the heart, and let that grow in thee, and be in thee, and breathe in thee, and act in thee, and thou shalt find by sweet experience that the Lord knows that, and loves and owns that, and will lead it to the inheritance of life, which is his portion.

Isaac Pennington, 1661

Discerning the Light is most effective when pursued communally. Not everyone is led to the same actions, and we cannot expect that what the Light makes clear to one person will always be made clear to everyone; but checking one's perceptions against the understanding of a broader spiritual community provides an invaluable anchor and partial safeguard against a false sense of Divine leading. The Light does not contradict itself; when Friends' understandings of what the Light requires are not just different but incompatible, this is a sign that more discernment is needed.

Since there is but one Light and one Truth, if the Light of Truth be faithfully followed, unity will result. "The Light itself," says Thomas Story, "is not divided, but one and the same entire, undivided Being continually." The nearer the members of a group come to this one Light, the nearer they will be to one another, just as the spokes of a wheel approach one another as they near the center.

Howard Brinton, 1952

Friends have often found that living as the Light leads us requires personal sacrifice. Early Friends faced severe persecution for their beliefs, and even in modern times Friends have frequently found themselves in confrontation with the state or other powerful interests. Friends who face no such dangers may still find that following the lit path conflicts with their natural desires to pursue comfort, pleasure, wealth, or prestige. Sacrifice by its nature involves

hardship, but sacrifices to which one feels deeply called can also be spiritually enriching.

The natural Mind is active about the Things of this Life; and, in this natural Activity, Business is proposed, and a Will in us to go forward in it. As long as this natural Will remains unsubjected, so long there remains an Obstruction against the Clearness of divine Light operating in us; but when we love God with all our Heart, and with all our Strength then in this Love, we love our Neighbours as ourselves; and a Tenderness of Heart is felt toward all People...

John Woolman, 1772

Friends should not feel troubled if the Light is difficult to discern, or if they do not feel clearly led to any particular course of action. Our first responsibility is simply to wait and to listen. No more can be asked than a sincere effort to discover and live out what one knows inwardly to be right. Even those most experienced in cultivating the spiritual life report long periods of drought; our part is to keep the ground prepared so that the Seed may sprout in its own time.

The first gleam of light, 'the first cold light of morning' which gave promise of day with its noontide glories, dawned on me one day at Meeting, when I had been meditating on my state in great depression. I seemed to hear the words articulated in my spirit, 'Live up to the light thou hast; and more will be granted thee.'

Caroline Fox, 1841

A Religion of First-Hand Experience

A religion based on discerning and responding to the Divine Light within each of us must be a religion of first-hand personal experience. Friends have long held that religion known only through

accounts in books, intellectual systems of theology, the mediation of clergy, or in any other way than personally and directly, leaves out what is most essential in spiritual life and may even displace the necessary work of opening ourselves to the inwardly transformative power of the Spirit.

And then [George Fox] went on, and opened the scriptures, and said, ‘The scriptures were the prophets’ words, and Christ’s and the apostles’ words, and what as they spoke they enjoyed and possessed, and had it from the Lord:’ and said, ‘Then what had any to do with the scriptures, but as they came to the spirit that gave them forth. You will say, Christ saith this, and the apostles say this; but what canst thou say? Art thou a child of light, and hast walked in the light, and what thou speakest, is it inwardly from God?’ &c. This opened me so, that it cut me to the heart; and then I saw clearly, we were all wrong. So I sat down in my pew again, and cried bitterly; and I cried in my spirit to the Lord, ‘We are all thieves, we are all thieves, we have taken the scriptures in words, and know nothing of them in ourselves.’

Margaret Fell, recounting events of 1652

Through much of our history, Friends objected even to the performance of psalms and other hymns, as “singing the condition of David”—that is, as expressing the spiritual state of King David, presumed author of many of the psalms—which would be a poor substitute for discovering and expressing one’s own spiritual state. Few Friends object to hymn singing nowadays, but we continue to recognize the importance of personal authenticity in religious expression, and the danger of putting vicarious religion in the place of real experience.

To say that religion must be known first hand does not mean that hearing the religious perspectives of others is of no profit; on the contrary, this can be of immense value. But the words of others have an effect only to the degree that they strike a resonant chord in ourselves and so lead us to experience something on a personal level. Other people may give a clearer articulation to what we know only

dimly in ourselves, or may present it in a new way or from a novel perspective, or may lead us to see elements of our own views as inconsistent with what we know more deeply to be true.

Conversely, in our own religious speech and conduct toward others, we may expect to be helpful only if what we say and do finds an echo in what the Spirit already testifies to them inwardly, or to use George Fox's phrase, if it "answers that of God" in them.

[B]e patterns, be examples in all countries, places, islands, nations, wherever you come; that your life and conduct may preach among all sorts of people, and to them. Then you will come to walk cheerfully over the world, answering that of God in every one; whereby in them ye may be a blessing, and make the witness of God in them to bless you: then to the Lord God you shall be a sweet savour, and a blessing.

George Fox, 1656

We cannot hope to call forward the Light in others unless our own communication with them flows from the Light in ourselves. Indeed, Quakers have traditionally held that all religious speech, whether ministry or prayer, in meeting for worship or elsewhere, should be under the direct and extemporaneous influence of the Spirit, and not simply recited from memory or composed by the "natural intellect":

The worship, preaching, praying, and singing, which we plead for, is such as proceedeth from the Spirit of God, and is always accompanied with its influence, being begun by its motion, and carried on by the power and strength thereof; and so is a worship purely spiritual...

Robert Barclay, 1678

Diversity of Belief

Our paramount concerns in religious life are to properly attend to God's Light in ourselves and all people, discern what we are called thereby to do, and respond to that call as led, both as individuals and as a community. A sincere effort in all these things leaves room for a wide variety of theological perspectives. Issues of religious doctrine are of secondary importance at best, and at worst serve as a divisive and harmful distraction from the real business of spiritual engagement and building a more just and peaceful world. Partly for this reason, we do not require assent to any specific list of religious tenets as a condition of membership in the Religious Society of Friends, nor does Illinois Yearly Meeting formally affiliate with any organization which requires such assent.

Humanity and Purity, Bowels and Holiness, they are the pure Religion and undefiled in God's Sight, in his Account; not Creeds but Practice, not Profession tho' of true Words, but Experience and good Living.

William Penn, 1692

Just as faith without works is dead, so too is a merely intellectual belief in religious ideas without the quickening power of the Spirit. Instituting a standard of belief in a religious organization encourages the false view that belief, by itself, has some redemptive or salutary effect. But the Light, properly attended to, effects a far more thoroughgoing and deeper transformation than simply coming to believe a doctrine.

For by our works we must be tried, and not by a profession founded on belief or faith; nor by faith only; for belief never saved the soul, except when it has become an operative belief—till the soul is led to condescend to those things that are pointed out to it by the light, and to work by it and with it...

Elias Hicks, 1826

In any organization in which a confession to specific articles of faith is required, some individuals will inevitably feel pressured to make such a confession, whether they are inwardly convinced of its truth or not. Such requirements tend therefore to undermine the integrity of the members, and to promote dishonesty and hypocrisy. Friends value authenticity above conformity, holding that any expression of religious faith should arise from the operation of God's Spirit within, not from external expectations.

And, dear friends, be faithful in what you know, take heed of making a profession of what you are not, and so you be found dissemblers before the Lord; but keep low in meekness and patience, standing in the will of God in all things...and then you shall be brought into a possession of what you have but had a profession, and find the power of what you had but in words, which is hid from all professions in the world, and is revealed no other way, but by the pure light of God dwelling in you, and you in it.

James Nayler, 1653

Many Friends have felt that some important elements of religious Truth resist formulation in words. Any statement of faith to which Friends were expected to subscribe would therefore provide an incomplete and distorted view of what we really regard as most important.

The deepest spiritual insights are wordless. A Friend called one morning to say that in meditation that morning she had had an overwhelming awareness of the reality of the Inner Self, the God Within. Her voice was filled with awe. The awareness was accompanied by a certainty, an understanding that could not be disputed, yet there were no words with which to express what had transpired.... A wordless knowing, an indisputable clarity of understanding—such is the eloquence of the mystical experience. It speaks to something deep within us, and we are never quite the same.

Betty Clegg, 1982

Although there is no specific list of doctrines to which we expect our members to assent, this does not mean that there are no specifically Quaker religious ideas. Far from it: Friends have developed a rich system of Quaker religious thought over a period of more than 350 years, and we encourage participants in our meetings to familiarize themselves with it and consider its principles carefully. Nor can it be said that we regard every conceivable religious idea as an equal expression of the Truth which God reveals in all people. In the [clearness process for membership](#), for example, meetings may consider whether an applicant's views are broadly compatible with the perspective of the meeting community as a whole and of Friends more generally. But the utmost caution must always be exercised not to let a concern for doctrine divert us down a divisive and lifeless path.

Christ and Christianity

Early Quakers understood themselves to be engaging in “primitive Christianity revived” (to use William Penn’s phrase), and through most of our history, Friends have been united in placing the person and teachings of Jesus Christ at the center of their spiritual life. Present-day Friends recognize and value the Christian foundations of Quaker faith, although an overtly Christian perspective is no longer universal among Friends. To varying degrees in our different meetings, many of us draw as heavily from other spiritual traditions as from Christianity, or understand the Light Within and other Quaker religious concepts in ways which are largely independent both of Christianity and of other traditional religions. Not a few of us approach such matters from a primarily or entirely non-theistic perspective. Many also of us are committed Christians—and diverse in our understanding of what that entails.

Yet underlying this diversity is a deeper unity, and a commitment to discerning and following the Light Within. We have found by experience that we reap more spiritual fruit through love and care for one another, through forbearance and forgiveness, through service and community, than we do through a vain attempt at achieving a homogeneous theological position.

It may nevertheless be useful and interesting to Friends of all perspectives to have some familiarity with historic or traditional Quaker thought on Christ—not as a normative standard of belief, but as an aid to understanding the original motivations for some of our concepts and practices, as a reference point in understanding our current diversity, and as part of the common heritage of the Religious Society of Friends. Many Friends have also found—sometimes to their surprise—that engaging with the perspectives of earlier generations of Friends serves to advance their own spiritual growth, or to significantly alter their understanding of Christianity.

But as I had forsaken the priests, so I left the separate preachers also, and those called the most experienced people; for I saw there was none among them all that could speak to my condition. And when all my hopes in them and in all men were gone, so that I had nothing outwardly to help me, nor could tell what to do; then, Oh! then I heard a voice which said, 'There is one, even Christ Jesus, that can speak to thy condition.' When I heard it, my heart did leap for joy.

George Fox, recounting events of 1647

As understood by Fox and other early Friends, Christ is found first and foremost by turning inward. They perceived the Light Within to be the Spirit of Christ, working in and through all people to guide us and redeem us into the life which God would have us live. Present within us at first perhaps only as a small seed, Christ is strengthened in us as we hearken to such guidance, remaking us anew. The voice of Christ within teaches a life of love, forgiveness, humility, and compassion; and turns us away from all that is contrary to such a life.

What is the *sum and substance of the true religion*? Is it not love from a principle of life? Is it not a travel out of the enmity of the creature into the love of God? Doth not the light of life spring in the love, and gather into the love? Doth not Christ, revealed in the heart, and leavening the heart with the favour of life, teach love to enemies, to bear with them in love, to seek them in love, to forgive them in love, to pray for them in love, to wish good to them, and wrestle with God for mercy towards them, even while they are hating and persecuting?

Isaac Penington, 1663

In contrast to many of their Puritan contemporaries, who understood salvation as an external payment of our debts by Christ, early Quakers saw redemption in Christ's inward work transforming and purifying the spirit.

Here is light, here is life, here is righteousness, here is peace, here is heavenly joy, here is the holy power, springing and bringing forth their fruits, and precious operations and effects in the heart; and here is assurance of the love of God in Christ for ever, and that God will never leave nor forsake that soul which is joined to him, and abides with him in this seed; but it shall be kept by the power of God, through the faith that springs from this seed, unto perfect redemption and salvation.

Isaac Penington, undated

It is not always clear from the writings of seventeenth century Friends how they understood the respective roles of the inward operation of Christ in the spirit and the outward, "historical" crucifixion and resurrection in effecting salvation. This issue became a major point of schism in the 1820s. In keeping with our general openness to diversity of belief, most of us are now content to regard such questions as matters of individual faith.

Friends and the Bible

Just as we are diverse in the roles we ascribe to Jesus in our spiritual lives, we are diverse also in the ways we use and interpret the Bible. There can be no doubt that to George Fox and the other founders of Quakerism, the Bible was deeply important and influential. Their writings are rich in scriptural allusions, and they clearly took themselves to be advancing the religion advocated by scripture taken as a whole and rightly understood.

Yet it would be a mistake to think that early Friends favored a “Bible-based” religion. Friends have always held that religious belief and practice ought to be based on what God reveals inwardly through the Light. Fox and other Friends claimed that what God taught inwardly could frequently be found also in the testimony of scripture, but it is the Light, not the Bible, which serves as the foundation.

This I saw in the pure openings of the light without the help of any man; neither did I then know where to find it in the scriptures; though afterwards, searching the scriptures, I found it. For I saw in that light and spirit which was before the scriptures were given forth, and which led the holy men of God to give them forth, that all must come to that spirit, if they would know God or Christ, or the scriptures aright, which they that gave them forth were led and taught by.

George Fox, recounting events of 1648

Early Friends believed that the scriptures were written under the guidance of the Light Within, and that therefore there could be no contradiction between scripture, rightly understood, and what the Light reveals to us now. While this may seem to imply that one can “test” apparent revelations by checking whether they are consistent with scripture, Friends have often held that such testing is problematic, because the correct interpretation of scripture—at least for the purposes of spiritual discernment—can itself be reliably

garnered only under the guidance of the Light. Without confidence that we are discerning accurately what God reveals inwardly and directly, we can have no confidence in our interpretation of scripture. Indeed, we would have no reason to trust the scriptures at all if not for a respondent spark in ourselves which finds itself echoed in them.

Friends believe that Divine guidance is freely available to all people, to guide our speech and actions. The idea that the scriptures were written under Divine guidance therefore does not accord them a unique status in human history. Revelation continues down to the present day; there can be no closed canon. Many of us feel that other writings, including some from very different religious traditions, express the Light no less than the Bible.

We now recognize that the writings of the Bible reflect to some extent the varying personal experiences and cultural perspectives of its authors, just as our own speech in meeting for worship, though offered under a sense of Divine guidance, may reflect the limitations of personal experience and understanding. The Bible is perhaps all the more useful for expressing a variety of different conceptions of God and the relation between God and humanity, including some from historical and cultural contexts quite far removed from our own. Yet underlying this variety we perceive a deeper unity: a single Spirit that finds expression in many ways.

Quakerism and Other Religious Traditions

Our experience of the divine-human relationship is that it is constant and eternal, and includes every human being at every moment.

Lloyd Lee Wilson, 1993

Friends hold that the Light Within is present in all people, regardless of religious affiliation. Quakers claim no monopoly on religious truth, and we welcome the insights we may gain from other religious traditions.

There is a Principle which is pure, placed in the human Mind, which in different Places or Ages hath had different Names; it is, however, pure, and proceeds from God. It is deep and inward, confined to no forms of Religion, nor excluded from any, where the Heart stands in perfect sincerity. In whomsoever this takes Root and grows, of what Nation soever, they become Brethren in the best Sense of the Expression.

John Woolman, 1760

What is truly important in spiritual life may be found among the adherents of many different outward faiths. This is not to say that all religions are equally true or that all spiritual paths are equally legitimate, for it seems clear that different faiths make different and incompatible claims. But discerning and responding to the Light Within does not require adherence to any particular tradition or organization. In a deeper sense, all those who humbly and sincerely commit themselves to do what they know inwardly to be right are united on a single path and in a common community, despite all superficial diversity.

The Humble, Meek, Merciful, Just, Pious and Devout Souls, are every where of one Religion; and when Death has taken off the Mask, they will know one another, though the diverse Liveries they wear here, make them Strangers.

William Penn, 1682

Just as spiritual truth is not confined to any one outward religion, so neither is any outward religion immune from error, even of the most egregious kinds. History provides innumerable examples of atrocities

and crimes committed in the name of religion. Even though Friends are known for our work toward justice, peace and equality, we are far indeed from being able to claim a spotless record. Many of the accomplishments for which Quakers are best known were the result of long efforts by small minorities of Friends who had to labor hard against resistance from other Quakers. Our attitude toward other faiths must be one of openness and humility, and we must be diligent in seeking out and uprooting the seeds of injustice, both in our individual beliefs and practices, and in the institutional structures of the Religious Society of Friends.

I was then carried in spirit to the mines, where poor oppressed people were digging rich treasures for those called Christians, and heard them blaspheme the name of Christ; at which I was grieved; for His name to me was precious. I was then informed that these heathen were told, that those who oppressed them were the followers of Christ; and they said among themselves, 'if Christ directed them to use us in this sort, then Christ is a cruel tyrant.'

John Woolman, 1772

Rites and Ceremonies, Days and Times

Friends have made an honest effort to take that last step which the Reformation did not take. They have wished to exhibit a genuinely *spiritual* religion.... They have wanted every step and stage of salvation and of worship to be a *living process*. They are afraid of phrases which are supposed to have some *sacred* efficacy. They are anxious not to have officials who belong in a special class and are assumed to have peculiar powers that others lack. They do not recognize places or buildings as having any inherent sanctity. They count only on those operations which are truly ethical and spiritual; that is, those operations which produce in the person *a new spirit and a new power to live by*. The religious life, for them, is witnessed by a new creation. There are no substitutes for life; there is nothing that can take the place of a momentous spiritual event.

For Friends, the essence of spiritual life is to attend diligently to God's promptings within, and respond as led. In our experience, a faithful response to such leadings will serve the practical goals of cultivating peace, forgiveness, justice, and loving care—in ourselves and in the world. The performance of rites and ceremonies is largely extraneous to such goals, and Friends have generally regarded ceremonial performance as inessential to religious life. Seventeenth century Friends took the unusual step of discontinuing the rites of baptism with water and the Lord's supper, which had been part of Christian practice from the earliest times. Most Friends today continue to view such ceremonies as separable from, and much less important than, the spiritual realities they represent.

It is perhaps not humanly possible to live a life completely free of ritualized behavior, and from some perspectives, Quaker practices such as meeting for worship might be seen as rituals. We do not attempt to eliminate everything in our conduct which serves to mark certain activities as religious. But we keep the level of ceremony low, in order to concentrate on what is truly vital.

Friends have sometimes claimed that to those who experience the spiritual reality which a ceremony symbolizes, the outward form becomes superfluous; and to those who have no such experience, it is pointless: an empty form. But rituals often seem much more powerful than we would expect of empty forms and superfluities. A well-designed ritual, like well-composed music, can induce a vivid sense of connection with the Divine. This power gives us all the more reason to be cautious about rituals. Authentic connection with the Divine is not simply a feeling, however vivid, but a regeneration of the spirit, bearing real fruits of love, compassion and forgiveness. An artificially induced feeling may or may not have such a regenerative effect; it is important not to let the feeling itself become one's primary goal in spiritual practice.

The whole of life is a sacrament. The worst, the poorest and meanest, of us as well as the bravest and the noblest before our brief day darkens, have broken divine bread. If we believed it wholly, for others as for ourselves, we should have peace. Even now, the measure of our peace is our belief in it, and our forgetfulness of it is the measure of our unrest. To forget it utterly is despair. That the daily bread of human existence, with all its hope and joy, its agony and failure, is broken to men by no blind fate, but by an Eternal Wisdom that is Eternal Love,—this is the underlying faith that saves us from madness. But it is a faith that must be proved, and striven for, and actualised, hour by hour and day by day. We must grip it hard, if we are to recognise God's sacraments as, one by one, they enter into our experience.

May Kendall, 1902

Ceremonies, religious holidays, and visits to places with religious significance can serve as occasions to rejoice in God's grace and bounty, and may invite a deeper connection with the Divine. However, we might be misled in confusing such observances and the emotions that accompany them with the Divine encounter itself. True religious experience contributes to inward transformation and its outward expression in how we live our lives.

For most of our history, Friends did not celebrate holidays; and while simple celebrations of Christmas and Easter have now become common, we continue to hold that all days are equally holy in the sight of God. Similarly, while we may feel special attachment to our old meetinghouses and other places associated with our Quaker heritage, we do not regard them as more holy than the world in general, all of which is consecrated to God's purposes.

Queries on the Light Within

- ✿ Do I strive for awareness of God's continuing presence in my life?

- ✿ Do I try to answer that of God in everyone, including those with whom I disagree or by whom I have been hurt?
- ✿ Am I sensitive to and obedient to the leadings of the Spirit?
- ✿ Do I endeavor to advance my spiritual growth by prayerful study of the Bible and other devotional literature?



Gradually I began to understand what Friends meant by God being present in every person, not only people within the Religious Society of Friends, but people universally. I saw God in the homeless person, in the drug addict, in my brothers and sisters who differed from me in their sexual orientation, in their mental or physical capabilities, even in those whose religions differed significantly from mine. I saw humanity as I saw myself—all of us made in the image and likeness of the Divine.

Deborah Saunders, 1998

Working in pediatrics provides one with limitless opportunities for spiritual growth and practice.... Learning to have compassion and trying to see that of God in someone who has just fatally injured a child or tortured and traded their child for drugs are really hard lessons. No professional training ever taught me these things. It was walking with Friends and understanding that, like in meeting for worship, it is not me, it is the Spirit who does the work. I just have to invite the Spirit and get out of the way.

Nancy Duncan, 2016

Testimonies

Among the distinctive Quaker principles are those known as the testimonies. These are values that Friends hold corporately, and which are reflected in our witness to the world.

The testimonies express our communal experience of the Light Within and our commitment to its fruits. We show this commitment in our outward lives: in our dedication to living peacefully, for example, and in our love for each other in “that which is eternal.” Living out the testimonies in thought and action reflects the influence of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

[B]e faithful in your Testimonies of *Light* and *Life*, against all those things that have come up in this *Night of Apostasy* from the *Light, Life* and *Power* of God.

George Fox, 1675

The testimonies are not a set of distinct tenets, such as those that might be found in a creedal religion. Still, for the sake of clarity, modern Friends often list the testimonies under separate categories such as “simplicity” and “equality.” In order to emphasize the unity of the testimonies, the testimony of integrity (“wholeness”) is often the first one cited, as wholeness characterizes the testimonies taken together.

Integrity

Perhaps the most fundamental testimony of Friends is that of integrity. This testimony calls us to a way of life aligned with the will of God as revealed by the Light within us, reflecting our devotion to truth, honesty, authenticity, and wholeness. We endeavor to become whole within ourselves, and to make our actions reflect our words and beliefs. We strive to hold to a single standard of truth, saying what we mean and doing what we say.

Let your 'yea' be yea and your 'nay' be nay; anything more than this comes from evil.

Matthew 5:37

The commitment of Friends to a single standard of truth has many practical implications. For example, Quakers do not swear to tell the truth in a court of law when instructed to do so, because we believe that swearing to tell the truth implies that we might otherwise lie or distort the truth. We invest our money on the basis of Quaker principles, rather than entrusting it to organizations that offer a higher rate of return but do not act in accordance with Friends' beliefs. Actions such as these might not be comfortable for us, but Friends hold integrity to be of a higher value than comfort.

The Inner Light does not lead men to do what is right in their own eyes, but that which is right in God's eyes.

Ellen S. Bosanquet, 1927

Queries

- ✿ How do my beliefs align with how my life speaks?
- ✿ Do I act with integrity in all my relations with others?

✿ How do I reestablish inner unity when there is a conflict between my faith and my practice?

Peace

Friends are widely known for our efforts to bring about a more peaceful world. We shun violence in word and deed, holding that war is inconsistent with God's will. Early Friends steadfastly refused to participate in wars, preferring imprisonment and persecution to harming other children of God.

We...utterly deny...all outward wars and strife, and fightings with outward weapons, for any end, or under any pretense whatsoever. This is our testimony to the whole world...[T]he Spirit of Christ, which leads us into all truth, will never move us to fight and war against any man with outward weapons, neither for the Kingdom of Christ nor for the Kingdoms of this world.

Friends' Declaration to Charles II, 1660

In recent times, Friends who have refused to fight have often requested to serve in some humanitarian way, and many have done so. Illinois Yearly Meeting stands in support of Friends who engage in conscientious objection, war tax resistance, relief and reconciliation work, and similar efforts to promote peace and justice.

Mindful of the presence of evil in the world, Friends attempt to counter it by using nonviolent means of preventing harm to others while bearing in mind that the perpetrators are also children of God. We have ministered to those on all sides of any conflict, in accordance with our belief that God "sends rain on the just and on the unjust," as Jesus states in Matthew 5:45.

The Quaker peace testimony is not simply a denunciation of outward violence, but also an affirmation of the power of inner peace. As

Quaker founder George Fox wrote about his response to those who offered him a military commission, “I told them that I lived in the virtue of that life and power that took away the occasion of all wars.” Fox understood that once we achieve peace inwardly, participation in war and violence becomes impossible. The closer we come to achieving the inward condition that God wants for us, the better able we are to cultivate peace in our family, our workplace, our community, and the world.

...a peace culture is a culture that promotes peaceable diversity. Such a culture includes lifeways, patterns of belief, values, behavior, and accompanying institutional arrangements that produce mutual caring and well-being as well as an equality that includes the appreciation of difference, stewardship, and equitable sharing of the earth’s resources among its members and with all living beings.... In other words, peaceableness is an action concept, involving a constant shaping and reshaping of understandings, situations, and behaviors in a constantly changing lifeworld, to sustain well-being for all.

Elise Boulding, 2000

Queries

- ✿ How do I nurture peacefulness in my heart?
- ✿ What do I do to prevent disagreements from escalating into strife?
- ✿ How does our meeting promote peaceful resolutions of conflict, both in the meeting community and in the wider world?

Simplicity

The Quaker testimony of simplicity denotes an inward centeredness that is responsive to the Divine. As we become centered, we are

drawn away from the complexity and clutter of secular life and led toward the purity and simplicity of truth to which Friends aspire.

Life is meant to be lived from a Center, a divine Center—a life of unhurried peace and power. It is simple. It is serene. It takes no time but occupies all our time.

Thomas Kelly, 1941

Friends do not have a set procedure for reflecting inward simplicity, but we have found that outward adornments can be impediments to achieving and maintaining it. Early Friends believed that wearing unadorned plain dress helped free them from vanity. Few contemporary Quakers wear traditional plain dress, but we continue to believe that some measure of detachment from material possessions and worldly aspirations helps us attend to the Light.

The increase of business became my burden, for though my natural inclination was toward merchandise, yet I believed Truth required me to live more free from outward cumbers and there was now a strife in my mind between the two; and in this exercise my prayers were put up to the Lord, who graciously heard me and gave me a heart resigned to his holy will.

John Woolman, 1774

Friends regard church rituals and material trappings as having the potential to hinder our attention to God's word. We gather in unadorned meeting houses and wait in holy silence for the Divine Spirit to guide our worship.

Queries

✿ How do my life choices reflect the testimony of simplicity?

- ✿ What distracts me from attending to my relation with the Divine?
- ✿ How does focusing on simplicity deepen my spirituality?

Equality

The testimony of equality is based on Friends' belief that there is that of God in everyone. We regard outward differences between people as less significant than the spiritual equality of all human beings. Quakers have always regarded men and women as equally worthy in God's eyes.

The power and spirit of God gives liberty to all, for women are heirs of life as well as men.

George Fox, 1676

Early Quakers refused to address their "superiors" by honorifics or titles, nor would they bow or doff their hats to them. These countercultural practices, which resulted in the persecution of our 17th-century forebears, have informed our tradition ever since that time. Quakers accepted and upheld the equality of people of different races, classes, and sexual orientations earlier than most of the rest of society, and have worked toward economic equality and social justice. In our meetings we strive to create an environment in which all of those attending feel fully welcome.

The testimony of equality does not imply that everyone has the same talents, but rather that each of us is equally a child of God, blessed with gifts that are different from and complementary to those of other people. When we unite as a meeting community, our diverse gifts unite to serve that community.

There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but in all of them and in everyone it is the same God at work.

Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians 12:4-6

It is time for all of us to be living witnesses of our testimony of equality, illustrating no separation between faith and daily actions. We need to build a Religious Society of Friends where everyone feels welcome for who they are, one that does not cause people to leave a major part of themselves, their cultural identity, outside the door. Let's begin to identify and separate the aspects of Quakerism that are not related to the core of our belief from the nonessential Eurocentric practices that have become attached to the way we practice our faith.

Vanessa Julye, 2006

Queries

- ✿ Do I believe in the spiritual capacity of all individuals, and their equality in the sight of the Divine?
- ✿ How can I free myself of discrimination and of prejudice? How can I treat all people as spiritual equals?
- ✿ How can I work to build a world in which spiritual equality is reflected in just and equitable social conditions?

Community

The testimony of community is central to Friends' practices. We worship together in order to be receptive and responsive to God's Light, and we minister to all members of our meeting community.

Our life is love, and peace, and tenderness; and bearing one with another, and forgiving one another, and not laying accusations one against another; but praying one for another and helping one another up with a tender hand...

Isaac Pennington, 1667

Friends' orientation toward community stands in contrast to the individualism that characterizes our contemporary secular world. We interpret Jesus' injunction to love one another as calling us to share concerns and practices with each other. Our collective attention to God's word, undertaken corporately in meeting for worship, serves as the foundation of the faith community to which Friends aspire.

As Quakers, we believe that we are called to be responsible and accountable to each other. We respond to the needs of our meeting community in many ways. These include [pastoral care](#) and the formation of [clearness committees](#), in which an individual Friend is held in the Light by fellow worshippers who seek God's will for that Friend.

A Quaker community offers loving support, guidance, comfort, and inspiration to all of those who become a part of it. It also serves as a foundation for our witness to other communities of which we are also a part.

We are an imperfect human community, growing into a more perfect relationship with God.

Lloyd Lee Wilson, 1993

Queries

✿ How welcoming is our meeting community?

- ✿ How do we foster the meeting's communal relationship with God and with each other?
- ✿ What life experiences and spiritual gifts do I bring to the meeting community?
- ✿ How do I balance the needs of others with my own needs?

Stewardship

Quakers consider all possessions and resources to be gifts that God has entrusted to our loving care. As individuals and as a community, we are called to selflessly consider whether our lifestyles and daily practices are consistent with this understanding.

O that we who declare against wars and acknowledge our trust to be in God only, may walk in the Light and thereby examine our foundation and motives in holding great estates! May we look upon our treasures, and the furniture of our houses, and the garments in which we array ourselves, and try whether the seeds of war have nourishment in our possessions...

John Woolman, c. 1770

In prayerfully reflecting on how we obtain and use our possessions and resources, we are likely to discover the seeds, not only of war, but also of oppression, self-indulgence, injustice, and ecological damage. Faithful stewardship consists in sincere efforts to remedy those ills. Each of us is called to consider what changes we can make in our lives, lifestyles, and relationships to better support the earth and all its creatures, and then to make those changes as best we can. Such reflection and transformation can be difficult and even painful, but Friends believe that faithful stewardship is essential to being in right relationship with one another and the Divine.

We are called to live in right relationship with all Creation, recognizing that the entire world is interconnected and is a manifestation of God.

Quaker Earthcare Witness, 2003

Queries

- * How do I assume my responsibility to the meeting community?
Am I sharing my time, talents and treasure?
- * What do I do to be in harmony with the earth and to protect it from abuse?
- * Do I experience a sense of wonder when I am in a natural environment?
- * How do I weave self, nature, and the Divine into spiritual unity?
- * How do my possessions, and the means by which they were manufactured and acquired, affect other people, and the natural environment?



As Friends, we are called to bear the testimonies in our hearts, minds, and actions. This is not a matter of memorizing lists of categories, whether those cited above or any others, but of responding to our experience of the Divine and gaining strength and insight from those who have preceded us in doing so. In learning of the courageous witness of our predecessors over the centuries—those devoted Quakers who have witnessed to that of God in all human beings, spoken truth to power, and honored the earth and all its

creatures—we orient ourselves toward more fully reflecting Quaker testimonies in our lives and encouraging others to do likewise.

Early Friends described themselves as persons who had undergone a radical transformation.... They were changed people inwardly, and their outward lives changed as a result. These outward changes were called the testimonies of their lives, which were now seen as witnesses to Truth. As a witness in the courtroom testifies to the truth he has personally seen and heard in order to convince a jury of peers of the truth, these new Friends witnessed with their lives, giving testimony about the Truth that had changed them.

Lloyd Lee Wilson, 1993

The testimonies are neither fixed nor unchangeable. In accordance with Friends' belief in "continuing revelation" they evolve, and our understanding of them evolves as well. Many of the issues to which early 21st-century Friends feel called to respond, such as nuclear power and recombinant genetic engineering, are the products of recent technological innovations which did not exist for earlier generations of Friends. In such cases we endeavor to discern God's will concerning whether a new testimony, or perhaps an extension of an old one, is in order.

Friends sustain and deepen their commitment to the testimonies through various means, including prayer, reading devotional literature, and attending to vocal ministry in meeting for worship. Some of us have found it helpful to regularly ask ourselves questions such as "How am I living the testimonies?" and "How am I being faithful?" In attending to the testimonies, we often find that issues that seemed complex or even insoluble are better understood and resolved through devoted attention to the leadings of the Holy Spirit.

The testimonies represent our highest values as Quakers. Learning to live in accordance with them is challenging. We often fall short, but we continue to strive.

I don't regard the testimonies as rules to walk by but ideals to aim for, as guides and reminders of how we should try to live.... We have not attained perfection; we are still on our way.

Kathleen Douglas, 2000

Religious Education

Monthly meetings have a continuing responsibility to foster understanding of the beliefs and practices of Friends to members, attenders, and children under their care, enhancing full participation in the life of the meeting.

Southeastern Yearly Meeting, 2013

Religious education is important for everyone who participates in a Friends meeting. Each individual is on a spiritual journey which continues throughout life, and everyone needs the opportunity to continue the search with others. Meetings can offer support by providing a First Day School program for children from infancy through high school as well as an adult religious education program. Most meetings have a committee or committees to plan and coordinate these programs. (See “[Religious education committee](#).”)

Children’s Programs

Children’s religious education programs will vary depending on the size of the meeting and the number of children. In a large meeting with lots of children, the children may be divided into appropriate age groups and classes designed for their respective developmental stages. In smaller meetings or meetings with few children, it may be necessary to have a multiage group. In this latter situation the program needs to be designed to maintain the interest of all the children. That may mean having older children assist their teachers by acting as mentors for the younger ones.

It is important that every meeting, regardless of size, be prepared to offer religious education to children every Sunday, even if there are none who attend regularly. Friends' experience is that meetings that are not prepared for the arrival of children are unlikely to keep those whose families do attend. Meetings without children are advised to consider having a box of materials that can be used with any children who come to meeting. An adult can use the materials to provide an instant opportunity for the children, even when that opportunity was unexpected.

The children's religious education program may begin with the very youngest children learning how to share, manipulate materials, listen to stories, and sit quietly in meeting for worship. As the children get older they need a more focused program that helps them to understand Quaker faith, testimonies, and practices; the Bible; and other religions; and supports them in exploring moral and religious issues. The program should be set up in a manner to ensure they have a grounding in Quaker faith and practice before they finish high school, a grounding that includes being a part of the meeting for worship on a regular basis. Curricular ideas can be obtained from appropriate yearly meeting committees and staff, Friends General Conference, the Quaker Religious Education Collaborative, someone involved with children's religious education in another monthly meeting, or other sources as appropriate.

The selection of teachers for First Day School is a weighty matter for any Friends meeting. While most adult Friends do not feel they are experts in teaching, it is important for the children to experience a variety of members as teachers, and for adults and children in the meeting to get to know each other. Meetings are encouraged to be sure the teachers are not always parents of the children and should support teachers in their own spiritual growth and grounding in Quaker faith and practice. (See "[Religious education committee](#)")

It is important to create an environment that is welcoming to the children. Whoever is responsible for leading a class is encouraged to be sure the classroom is inviting, and that it has been prepared

before the participants arrive. Children will be happy to see materials ready, and to be in a space that makes them feel important and welcomed. The teachers need to pay attention to how the children react during class in order to determine whether it would be a good idea to take a different approach or even change topics.

Adult Programs

There are a variety of ways to approach adult religious education programs. They may occur before or after meeting for worship or at another special prearranged time. Their purpose is to help members and attenders become more spiritually grounded, to provide the opportunity to share spiritual journeys, to reflect together on how our faith guides our daily lives, and to facilitate the spiritual growth of the meeting community. The program will therefore focus on Quaker faith, testimonies and practices; the Bible; writings by Quakers; and/or other matters that arise out of spiritual concerns. A session may consist of a discussion of a pamphlet or book, a presentation by one individual who has had a unique experience or has studied a particular topic, or the sharing of spiritual practices. Friends have found that such programs help them deepen their experience of the Divine and strengthen their connection with one another.

Adult religious education programs sometimes utilize a Quaker process known as “worship sharing.” Worship-sharing sessions typically begin with a Friend offering a query on a preselected topic. The assembled group enters a period of waiting worship, during which any Friend who feels led may respond worshipfully to the query. Other Friends are welcome to respond to the query, either in a prearranged order (such as going around in a circle) or as they feel led. Everyone present is expected to listen carefully, to refrain from responding directly to individual messages, and to allow time between speakers. The Friend who has offered the initial query takes

responsibility for making sure that everyone present has an opportunity to speak if led to do so. Once sharing has come to an end, the group either proceeds to another query or concludes the worship-sharing session.

Adult education programs should be designed to be of interest to newcomers, as well as to seasoned members and attenders. In order to facilitate inquirers and new attenders learning more about Quakers, a meeting may also want to periodically host special introductory classes.

Retreats and Intergenerational Programs

In addition to the educational opportunities for children and adults, a meeting may want to have special times to gather. These may involve a day of shared activities around a specific topic or spiritual practice, or they may be retreats that last a weekend at a place away from the meetinghouse. In either case, the meeting may choose to invite someone from outside the meeting to be a facilitator; alternatively, a meeting committee may take on that responsibility. Retreats can be for adults only, designed for a specific age group of children in the meeting, or intergenerational. Other all-meeting activities are also encouraged, one example being a picnic to celebrate the beginning of First Day School in the fall or to mark its end in the late spring. A meeting could participate in a peace vigil or other sort of demonstration based on Quaker testimonies. In every situation it is important first to have a discussion about how the event relates to our Quaker principles.

Programs Beyond the Local Meeting

Many Quaker organizations provide opportunities for individuals to continue their spiritual journeys. Illinois Yearly Meeting offers workshops and worship sharing at the annual sessions, along with special weekend workshops at other times during the year. In addition, the yearly meeting provides programming for children and teens at the annual sessions and special programs at other times. Such programs encourage relationships among young Friends as well as fostering their spiritual development. Retreats and workshops on a variety of topics are available through Pendle Hill Retreat Center in Pennsylvania and the Earlham School of Religion in Indiana. Other regional, national and international Quaker groups provide opportunities for individual Friends and meetings to grow spiritually. (See “[Wider Quaker Organizations](#)”)

Religious Education...is on the right track if it recognizes that the source of religion is within us as a native endowment, and that the function of education is to call this endowment forth, supply it with the nourishment it needs in order to grow, and guide it in ways that promote maturing. People should have reason to be assured that formal religion is not contrary to the springs of innate religious experience and longing, but is in accord with the life and light within, and simply seeks to direct and develop this spiritual life.

Jean Toomer, 1947

Queries

- ✿ How does our meeting provide for the religious education of children and adults?
- ✿ How do we recognize and nurture the gifts of children and adults in our meeting?
- ✿ How does our meeting prepare adults and children for worship and for living in a manner consistent with the principles of the Religious Society of Friends?

- ✿ How do we share our spiritual journeys with each other, including our children?
- ✿ How do we help our children participate in all aspects of the meeting community?
- ✿ Does our meeting require background checks and mandated reporter training for teachers and other childcare workers?
- ✿ Does our meeting encourage individuals to participate in events beyond the local meeting?

Friends' Manner of Decision Making

So Friends are not to meet like a company of people about town or parish business, ...but to wait upon the Lord, and feeling his power and spirit to lead them...that whatsoever they may do, they may do it to the praise and glory of God, and in unity in the faith, and in the spirit, and in fellowship in the order of the gospel.

George Fox, undated

When Friends gather to do business, the process is the same for committees and meetings of all levels. We gather together to listen for how God would have us move forward. The decisions made during the Quaker meeting for worship with a concern for business are the sense of the meeting of those in attendance. Minuted decisions remain until such time as the body is moved to change them.

A Quaker Meeting for Business

As many Friends as are able gather together to make the decisions that affect the meeting community. We begin by centering down in waiting worship, which continues into the items of business. If the business is difficult, or if the group feels keenly its need to be brought together in the Spirit, this silence may go on for a long time.

The [clerk of the meeting](#) introduces the items of business, one at a time. Some are small matters, while others are large; some appear mundane, while others deal directly with matters of faithful

commitment. Each piece of business, regardless of its nature, is raised into the waiting, seeking silence.

Participants, when they feel led to speak to the issue under consideration, seek recognition from the clerk, and address the clerk or the meeting at large. All try to listen deeply to each speaker, trying to hear the guidance of God: the still, small voice which may find expression through any one of us, or (more often) find partial expression in several Friends' contributions. The clerk keeps a slow, reflective pace and an atmosphere hospitable to many different perspectives. Sometimes quite opposite views are expressed; elements from such diverse perspectives may reappear later, in unexpected combinations.

Slowly, or sometimes quickly, an agreement emerges: Friends find unity in a particular course of action which seems right for the meeting. Often, this course of action differs significantly from any idea present when the issue was introduced. The clerk or others try to put this agreement into words, as they recognize its emergence. Before the item of business is done, the clerk or [recording clerk](#) will voice this "sense of the meeting" very explicitly, to check their understanding with the meeting; the minute recording the decision is composed on the spot and read back "in the face of the meeting." The actual decision takes place when this clearly formulated understanding is accepted by the assembled group. No vote is ever taken.

When the decision has been formulated to the meeting's satisfaction, the group settles into more silence before the next item of business—which is introduced, and handled, in the same way.

Understanding the Process

When I try to think of decisions made in business meetings that were more important than the process by which they were made, I am unable to. The gifts generated by that process seem endless.

Barry Morley, 1993

Friends' approach to decision-making differs fundamentally from the decision-making processes in the world around us, whether in government, business, academia, volunteer organizations, or other religious groups. Our decisions are not based on the desires of the majority. Neither do they rest on compromises that seek to placate groups or individuals by granting some of their wishes. The sense of the meeting sought by Friends is that course of action recognized by the group as a leading for the group as a whole; often, this is understood in terms of finding the will of God for the meeting. While we prefer our decisions to be unanimous, unanimity is not the goal of this process, and it is no guarantee that such a sense of the meeting has been achieved.

In the Religious Society of Friends, decisions about matters of business are the responsibility of the entire meeting. Our decisions are not made by an administrator or a council of representatives. Any of us may have some Divine guidance on any matter; without each Friend's care the meeting community risks missing the full picture of what it is being called by God to do.

The basis upon which we hold our meetings for business...is that this is God's world, that He has unfinished business for us to do, and that it is possible for us to ascertain His will for us in this world.

Thomas S. Brown, undated

Meeting for business is based on deep, open, prayerful listening. We listen for guidance directly, and we also listen carefully and prayerfully to each other, expecting to find guidance from the same

deep source in one another's words. This is the same waiting and listening, the same openness to the leadings of the Spirit, that characterize all our meetings for worship. In doing business, we wait together to be led as a body, just as we wait in meeting for worship for a leading to speak in ministry.

The spiritual growth of the meeting and of its people is the most important outcome of any piece of business. As a consequence, even routine business needs to be conducted in the Light. The processes that are used for small things will be the ones that come naturally when a more demanding issue arises. Our love and respect for each other, and our faith that deep springs of guidance and inspiration are always available, empower us to trust that a faithful path forward can be found. Meeting for worship with a concern for business, like other meetings for worship, can lead to the experience of a "gathered" meeting, which can be profoundly transformative both for the group and for the individuals involved.

Working Together Toward a Sense of the Meeting

Some advices on participation in meeting for business

- ✿ Hold the meeting prayerfully in the Light; hold each speaker and the clerks in the Light.
- ✿ Pay attention to the process, as well as to the issues. Quaker practice in meeting for business is best learned by first-hand observation and participation.
- ✿ Seek the good of the meeting as a whole, the will of God, the mind of Christ; be prepared to let go of your personal preferences, individual comfort, and ego.
- ✿ Stay centered, or return if you find you have strayed.

- ✿ Give your full attention to the person speaking, and to the Spirit Within. This kind of attention is incompatible with formulating your own responses while someone else is speaking.
- ✿ Allow others to complete what they are saying, and then allow some silence for reflection before you begin to speak.
- ✿ Consider before you speak if your message will bring the group closer to a sense of the meeting or if you are only repeating what another Friend has already said.
- ✿ Seek the clerk's recognition before speaking; address the clerk or the meeting as a whole, not individual Friends.
- ✿ Speak in the hope of serving the meeting's search for Truth. Your personal opinion, or your feelings on an issue, are relevant only insofar as they help in that search.
- ✿ Share the part of the Truth that is given you. The meeting needs the Light as given to each person, in order to find the path that is right for it.
- ✿ Speak to the item of business being discussed. Stay close to the essentials that can help the meeting reach a decision. Stop when you are done, so others can hold your statement, and the business at hand, in the Light.
- ✿ In some larger meetings, it is a helpful custom for each person to speak only once to an item of business; in smaller meetings, especially when part of the work is gathering information, this is not always either practical or helpful.
- ✿ Let your speech be plain, simple, and clear. Debate and appeal to emotion are both out of place in meeting for business. This is more than a matter of group style: such simplicity supports an attitude of seeking, of listening for Divine guidance.
- ✿ When there is tension in the room, take time to consider that we are members of a gathered community committed to loving fellowship and unity in the Divine.

- ✿ Support the clerks in prayer as they formulate the minute.
- ✿ After a matter is concluded, return to silence and center again in preparation for the next item of business.

The roles of the clerk and recording clerk in meeting for business

A major responsibility of the clerk is to discern when the meeting has reached a sense of the will of God on each item of business. The clerk (and recording clerk if there is one) articulates this sense as an explicit minute for the meeting's consideration. The roles of clerk and recording clerk are at most superficially analogous to those of the chair and secretary of a secular organization, and clerks with such experience will find that it does not always serve them well. Those clerking a Quaker meeting need to learn how to fulfill this role by talking with other clerks and watching them at meetings for business, by attending to supportive feedback from their own meeting, and by reading or attending workshops.

Good clerking requires both significant spiritual preparation and practical organization. A meeting calendar, with dates when certain actions must be initiated in order to produce the outcomes the meeting expects, is invaluable. Preparing an agenda is important: identifying what items of business are to come before the meeting, choosing an order. It is prudent to make sure that committee clerks or others presenting business are prepared. The clerk should be aware of the history of past decisions related to present items of business. Preparing the agenda also involves considering beforehand which items of business could wait until a future meeting for business, if a decision proves unexpectedly complex or difficult, or if the Spirit moves in unforeseen ways. The agenda is never considered more than tentative; actual consideration of business should be left to the guidance of the Spirit. Reading a query at the beginning of meeting is often used to help settle Friends in readiness for business.

The clerk would do well to take time before the meeting to become centered and open to Divine leadings.

The clerk's responsibility is to help the meeting community hear and recognize the will of God for that community. This task should come before the clerk's personal preferences, or even deep convictions; the meeting's trust that the clerk is seeking to assist that corporate discernment should not be abused. Clerks are expected to stay out of the discussion and avoid contributing their own perspectives to the business at hand. On rare occasions when the call to speak seems imperative, or when the clerk feels unable to remain impartial on an issue before the meeting, they may step down temporarily and make clear that they are speaking, for the moment, not as clerk but as an individual member of the meeting, then go back to impartial clerking. If the clerk steps down for more than a short time, someone else should be appointed to serve temporarily in their place. The clerk tries to encourage an open, seeking atmosphere in which divergent perspectives can be voiced.

Discussions should be kept focused on the current item of business; a meandering discussion with little focus will not generally come to closure. The clerk may have to intervene to help Friends focus, interrupting digressions or personal sharing which is not relevant to the issue at hand. A secure trust that the clerk is not trying to influence the meeting's deliberations may make these interventions easier.

Moments may arise when worshipful spirit is lost. The clerk or others who recognize this may ask for silence and a return to waiting worship.

Composing and reading back the sense of the meeting immediately after it is reached is very helpful, especially with difficult decisions. "Minuting in the face of the meeting," as this practice is called, has been the standard since minutes were written longhand in record books; the practice is frequently used today and has been found to be helpful. Clerks need not feel embarrassed by the time it takes to compose a minute, or to let the meeting reflect on it. They may ask

for quiet while they write, reminding the meeting that this is an opportunity to return to the center. Clerks may also ask to be held in the Light while attempting to capture the sense of the meeting, especially on a difficult issue. Reading back the minute provides a helpful check on everyone's understanding of the decision. Friends are generally clearer about the decision, and more ready to implement it, when the meeting has paused to see and feel and savor the unity that has been reached.

Minute-keeping is a skill requiring a good deal of thought and care. The following advices may be a useful guide:

- ✿ Record decisions, not discussion. It is not necessary, and not usually helpful, to record all opinions expressed in the meeting. Some explanation of the discussion which led to a decision is occasionally useful for understanding the decision itself, but should generally be kept to the minimum necessary to serve this purpose.
- ✿ Include all relevant information and word minutes carefully so that they will be comprehensible and clear to Friends who are not present at the meeting and to those referring to the minute in the future.
- ✿ Make explicit whether a decision was made. If the meeting seems inclined toward a decision, but not quite ready to undertake it, avoid writing a minute which could almost, but not quite, be interpreted as implying that the decision was made.
- ✿ Avoid mentioning specific individuals except as necessary to the business of the meeting, for example in making individual responsibilities clear, or in recording individuals, at their request, as standing aside from a decision. (See "Glossary," [Stand aside.](#))
- ✿ Minor editing of minutes after the meeting to correct grammatical errors or improve clarity and style is generally

considered acceptable, but any changes affecting the substance of the minutes must be approved in the business meeting.

- ✿ Minutes must be archived, not just distributed to meeting participants. It is the responsibility of the recording clerk to see that a copy of the minutes is stored in a permanent file or minute book.

Process for items of business

Meeting affairs are sometimes delegated to committees or to individual Friends. At other times, a concern comes to the meeting for business from a committee or from an individual. Considerable preparation may be necessary to present the matter clearly; this preparation should be done beforehand. This may involve finding out the facts, doing the calculations, thinking things through, giving the matter careful and prayerful consideration.

Friends who are called to present at meeting for business will do well to consider beforehand whether they are providing information, or requesting seasoning, or recommending a decision. If the business requires a decision from the meeting, the presentation should be made clearly and completely, then the presenter should step back. The clerk of the meeting then calls for consideration of the matter. The meeting may need some time to come to the clarity that those who are bringing the business have already reached—and then may find itself led in a different direction. Trying to control the decision is an impediment to corporate discernment.

The meeting should take the time to be clear about the responsibilities of its committees, especially what it expects them to decide at the committee level. It should trust the work of meeting committees; the meeting should not expect, during meeting for business, to go over every fact and every consideration behind a recommendation.

It is helpful to understand that the consideration of an item of business comes in two parts. The first part is to understand the

recommendation of the committee or individual, for which questions may need to be asked and answered. The second part is to discern the way forward for the meeting.

In response to a committee's report the meeting minutes an action. Possibilities include acknowledging receipt of the report, minuting a decision whether to enact recommendations from the report, holding the matter over for further discernment either by the committee or by the meeting as a whole, or taking other action as the meeting is led.

Challenges

Question: What if I do not presently see that service in a thing, that the rest of my brethren agree in; in this case, what is my duty and theirs?

Answer: It is thy duty to wait upon God in silence and patience, out of all fleshly consultations; and as thou abidest in the simplicity of the TRUTH, thou wilt receive an understanding with the rest of thy brethren, about the thing doubted. And it is their duty, whilst thou behavest thyself in meekness and humility, to bear with thee, and carry themselves tenderly and lovingly towards thee...

William Penn, 1681

The primary goal of the meeting's decision process is to come into unity in God. The meeting and those participating in a meeting for business are urged not to allow the issues before it to eclipse this fundamental goal. Thus the meeting should cultivate an openness to receive a truth that may be missing from the perspectives most frequently expressed, to be open to alternatives to preconceived ideas. The clerk should see to it that this process is not rushed;

returning to silent worship can often help a meeting's ability truly to listen to the variety of perspectives within it.

Sometimes, even in good Quaker process, a meeting may not find unity to move forward on an item of business. This does not automatically mean that the process is not working. It may take some time, but Friends can continue with patience, discernment, and faith that the way will open, perhaps not as we expect at first. If a united sense of the meeting cannot be found, the issue is left for further seasoning. The old policy remains unchanged, or the new business not acted upon; the subject is set aside until another meeting for business to allow for more prayer, reflection, and discernment. The ultimate solution, and the group that takes the time to come to unity about it, are generally both the better for waiting.

Trying to hurry an item of business, either because the meeting has tired of it, or because the meeting for business is held in a strictly limited time period, often causes problems, and should be avoided. A meeting may search for a long time before it finds the course of action right for it. Other times, it is there early in the process, but it is long before the meeting is able to recognize its rightness. Friends' really creative or radical insights have often taken a very long time to reach full meeting support.

A meeting that finds itself unable to resolve an item of business might consider hosting a "threshing session." Threshing sessions are spirit-led discussions that are held separately from the meeting for business, thus allowing the meeting community to season an issue without the pressure of making an immediate decision. They offer an opportunity for background information to be provided and reviewed, and for Friends to share their beliefs concerning what they consider most important about the matter at hand. Those present are expected to listen carefully and to allow time between spoken messages so that everyone can hear and absorb what is being shared. Threshing sessions often lead to a change in perceptions, individually and/or corporately, which may well allow the meeting to move forward the next time it gathers to do business.

Despite Friends' sincere efforts at discernment, an agreement reached by the meeting will occasionally reflect something quite other than the will of God. Friends may happen to agree for different, conflicting, reasons; when all are eager to act, everyone may become convinced that they can have what they want by ignoring these differences. Major differences may become evident at a later step, however, making united action very difficult. Other times, unanimity is reached because people have dropped out of the process, feeling unheard or unheeded. A unanimous decision, in cases like this, is unlikely to reflect any deep leading for the meeting, and is often better laid aside for a time.

Sometimes a sense of the meeting is seen to emerge, though a Friend present remains unclear that the course of action in question represents a faithful response by the meeting to the Divine guidance it has received. When a Friend is not united in the emerging sense of the meeting, it may be because of personal factors or circumstances that intrude on that Friend's prayerful consideration of the issue; it may be because the Friend discerns that the course of action toward which the meeting appears to be heading is not sufficiently faithful to the leadings of the Spirit; or it may be because the Friend is simply unable to discern God's will on this particular matter.

A Friend who is not drawn into the unity of the emerging sense of the meeting may ask to "stand aside" so as not to impede the meeting's work. However, a Friend who has a clear leading, or "stop," that a proposed action is not appropriate should clearly communicate this concern. It is a responsibility to do so even if it is uncomfortable for the individual or for the meeting. Typically, a meeting will not proceed if even a single individual is not in unity. This is not to say that an individual Friend has the prerogative to block a decision. But the meeting should be extremely cautious in accepting a course of action where one or more Friends present have expressed contrary leadings. It should weigh heavily whether moving ahead with the matter at hand is not less important than the loving fellowship of the meeting. When a Friend objects and stands in the way, there is a mutual obligation for the meeting and the individual to do further

discernment. Our practice should reflect faithfulness to the expectation that Divine guidance will lead the meeting into unity when all humbly submit themselves to Divine will.

The unity we seek depends on the willingness of us all to seek the truth in each other's utterances; on our being open to persuasion; and in the last resort on a willingness to recognise and accept the sense of the meeting as recorded in the minute, knowing that our dissenting views have been heard and considered. We do not vote in our meetings, because we believe that this would emphasise the divisions between differing views and inhibit the process of seeking to know the will of God. We must recognise, however, that a minority view may well continue to exist. When we unite with a minute offered by our clerk, we express, not a sudden agreement of everyone present with the prevailing view, but rather a confidence in our tried and tested way of seeking to recognise God's will. We act as a community whose members love and trust each other. We should be reluctant to prevent the acceptance of a minute which the general body of Friends present feels to be right.

Britain Yearly Meeting, 1994

The faith of Friends is that there is a right order, a right way forward, that can be discerned by opening ourselves to God's leading for the Meeting. If we act on that faith, no matter how difficult the decision facing us might be, we will wait for the truth to become visible. Anything is possible when we wait in worship.

Marty Walton, 1997

Queries

For the individual:

- ✿ How do I prepare my heart and mind for meeting for worship with a concern for business?

- ✿ How do I speak, listen and act in meeting for business in a way that differs from conventional secular practices?
- ✿ Am I open to the personal transformation that can occur when I accept that the meeting may be guided in unity by God in a manner that differs from the approach I thought best when I arrived?

For the meeting:

- ✿ Do we hold our meetings for business under Divine guidance?
- ✿ How do we respond when we become aware that we are no longer speaking under a corporate sense of Divine guidance?
- ✿ How do we create an atmosphere where everyone who wishes to speak can be heard?
- ✿ When we seem to have reached an impasse on an issue, do we strive to find different ways of presenting the issue or specifying the alternatives? If the issue is laid over, do we use the interim period to spiritually seek a way forward?
- ✿ Are our meetings for business held in the spirit of being on God's time rather than on our time?

Clearness and Support Committees

The clearness committee is, at its heart, about the mystery of personhood and of God's call in our lives. These are intertwined dynamics by which we become more fully human.

Valerie Brown, 2017

Clearness Committees

Clearness committees are intended to serve Friends who seek assistance in reaching clarity about a personal concern or decision. Such committees help Friends determine what God would have them do based on the Quaker belief in the Inner Light in each person. (See "[The Light Within and Its Religious Implications](#).”) The task of clearness committees is to provide spiritual support in helping Friends attend to, and be guided by, the Inner Light.

Any Friend is welcome to seek the assistance of a clearness committee to clarify an issue and seek a way forward, or to discern the truth of a leading. More specifically, Friends may seek clarity about a proposed marriage (see "[Marriage](#)"), membership in a monthly meeting (see "[Membership](#)"), a change in family circumstances, a move to another region, a change in vocation or job, a contemplated [divorce](#), taking a stand or witness on a public issue, [traveling in the ministry](#), or any other personal concern for which a decision is needed.

The process generally begins when a Friend brings a personal concern to a member of the care and counsel or equivalent committee. The committee inquires into the nature of the concern in order to determine whether it is best taken up by a clearness

committee or in some other way, such as a support committee (see below) or a professional from outside of the meeting community. In the latter case, the care and counsel committee may provide resources to the Friend with the concern. (See “[Pastoral Care](#)”)

Once a decision is made that a clearness committee is to be formed, the care and counsel committee, often in consultation with the individual Friend, establishes that committee. The clearness committee is typically composed of three to six Friends who represent a diversity of gifts and backgrounds. Friends who can deeply center, who are open to others and their situations, and who listen well and demonstrate empathy are good candidates for clearness committees. Before making a commitment to be part of a clearness committee, a Friend who has been asked to serve should understand why they have been asked, as well as the nature of the issue and the likely time commitment.

Since the clearness committee is designed to address a concern or decision, it can be helpful for committee members to be given some relevant background information before meeting with the Friend in question. It is therefore advisable for that individual to provide written information to the committee about the situation in advance.

It is important that members of the clearness committee commit to maintaining confidentiality and respecting the privacy of the Friend with the concern. However, if the concern raises issues of child abuse, committee members cannot ensure confidentiality, as they are legally regarded as mandated reporters. Confidentiality can also not be ensured if issues involving domestic violence, elder abuse, suicidal ideation or behaviors of a criminal nature are made known to the committee.

Once a clearness committee has been formed, a clerk or convener is chosen, as is a recorder. The clerk ensures that a suitable meeting space is secured, convenes the meeting(s), sets time parameters, and articulates the process to be followed. The recorder takes notes on whatever is deemed relevant and helpful for the Friend seeking clarity.

Once the agreed-upon time for a meeting arrives, the clerk of the clearness committee facilitates the meeting and helps ensure a worshipful atmosphere. The clerk begins the meeting by inviting those present to enter into a period of waiting worship. As arranged in advance, the clerk or the person who has requested the clearness committee speaks out of silence and shares the question(s) to be answered and the issues involved. The members of the committee then engage with the Friend (or Friends, in the case of a clearness committee for marriage) to clarify the concern under consideration and seek a path forward with the help of Divine guidance. Drawing on the Spirit that unites Friends in meeting for worship, they ask clarifying questions to help the individual seek clarity as to God's will for them.

The discipline of asking honest, open questions is at the heart of the clearness committee.

Parker Palmer, 2004

Questions that are clear and brief facilitate the clearness process by enabling the Friend with the concern to focus and gain insight. The individual may choose not to respond to particular questions, or may ask for the group to return to waiting worship at any time. In some cases, failure to answer questions can inhibit insight; in others, the individual may not know the answer or may feel the information is too private to be shared in that setting.

Clearness committee members are expected to refrain from expressing judgments and imparting advice, much less attempting to solve the situation or make decisions for the seeker. All parties seek clearness in a corporate endeavor to find the way forward. It is the spirit with which the committee members approach their task that facilitates this outcome.

Clearness Committee members ‘turn to inward attentiveness, being fully present, gathered to seek God’s will through waiting, listening, compassionate support, and understanding.... Committee members perceive whether their own interior movement is aligned with others’ interior movement; they sense God palpably present.’

Valerie Brown, 2017

Toward the end of the meeting, the clerk may ask each person present to share a sense of what has emerged. A determination is then made as to next steps. These might include the scheduling of another meeting and/or defining other ways that the committee can support the Friend in moving forward. Committee members are advised that they should not discuss with anyone the matters for which the clearness committee has been assembled, except in a formal committee meeting. The clerk ends the meeting as it began, with a period of waiting worship.

Clearness committees for membership or marriage report to the care and counsel committee. That committee then makes a recommendation to the monthly meeting, which subsequently decides whether to approve the individual for membership or the couple for marriage under the care of the meeting. Clearness committees that are convened to discern whether the meeting should take a leading or ministry under its care report directly to the monthly meeting or to the care and counsel committee, according to the practice of that meeting. (See “[Recognizing Spiritual Gifts and Leadings](#).”) Clearness committees established for other matters do not ordinarily bring business to the care and counsel committee or the monthly meeting. Such committees therefore do not normally give reports or recommendations to anyone other than the Friend who raised the concern.

Support Committees

There are times when an individual Friend may feel the need for ongoing support that does not necessarily involve reaching clearness about a personal concern. This may happen for Friends who are facing hardship or other personal challenges or taking on new responsibilities. A newly-appointed presiding clerk, for example, may seek a support committee to provide guidance in carrying out the responsibilities of that position. This support may come from the monthly meeting, the yearly meeting, or members of wider Quaker organizations, particularly those who are familiar with the individual who is seeking support. Alternatively, a Friend serving in an important position on wider Quaker organizations may seek support from other Friends at the local or yearly meeting level.

In any of these cases, a Friend may request that the care and counsel committee form a support (or guidance) committee for them. Alternatively, Friends who sense that someone in their meeting is struggling may offer to form a support committee on that person's behalf.

Meetings of support committees tend to follow a similar process to meetings of clearness committees. Members of support committees are expected to ask questions, listen, and offer supportive feedback rather than expressing judgments and imparting advice. If a Friend needs a support committee over an extended period of time, the meeting replaces members of the committee as needed. Support committees may continue until the individual's concern is resolved.

It is advisable for support committees to be time-bound, although the need for ongoing support from the meeting may continue for a longer period than the tenure of the committee itself.

Queries

- ✿ Am I willing to ask for a clearness or support committee for help in dealing with significant issues in my life?

- ✿ Is the meeting willing and able to provide clearness and support committees for those who request them?
- ✿ Are the meeting's processes for the formation and performance of clearness committees clear and readily available?

Membership

Becoming a member of the Religious Society of Friends is a public act of accepting God's gift of a spiritual home and family. In being recorded as a member, one accepts the support and practices of this community for spiritual growth and assumes responsibility for the activities of the meeting as well as its practical and spiritual maintenance. This is a spiritual community bound together by love in which there are mutual expectations for trust, open communication, forgiveness, participation, and perseverance in the face of differences. Membership is not a sign of having reached a particular level of spiritual accomplishment, but it does mean that the new member has decided to pursue their spiritual development in the context of this Quaker community.

The word "seekers" has often been used by and for Friends, but the word may have different connotations for seekers who are members and for seekers who are visitors. People visit us seeking a spiritual community with which they might feel in accord. Members have found a place in our community and are seeking ways to live out the spiritual gifts experienced there.

While some will have grown up in the meeting, others will come first as visitors, then as regular attenders, before deciding to seek membership.

Moving Toward Membership

Visitors to the meeting should be welcomed, and care taken to help them understand and relate to Friends' ways. Study groups in which newer attenders mix with experienced members can help, as can easy

access to Quaker books, periodicals, and pamphlets. Regular attenders should be invited to participate in the life of the meeting—to observe and take appropriate part in our distinctive ways of worship, business, and committee work, and in our potlucks, work projects, and ministries. Membership in the Religious Society of Friends is membership in the monthly meeting community. The best orientation to a meeting may be the opportunity to be with its members while they do what they care about.

Attenders may wish to discuss their spiritual goals and concerns with Friends before making an application for membership, or before feeling any clear interest in applying. Experienced Friends should be alert to this possibility, and make themselves available for such discussion. Attenders who find themselves nourished by their involvement with meeting, comfortable with Friends' approach and testimonies, and interested in taking up the responsibilities of membership, should be encouraged to consider membership.

Sometimes long-time attenders act with the responsibility and commitment hoped for in members, and feel that they are members in all but name. A meeting might gently encourage such attenders to join, as a matter of truth-telling and integrity. But occasionally committed attendance without membership is the right choice for someone, and should be respected.

Applying for Membership: The Clearness Process and Queries

An attender who wishes to join begins by making a formal request to the monthly meeting. Usually this takes the form of a letter, which often will describe the nature or history of the applicant's interest in Friends. The clerk of the meeting shares this request with the meeting during a meeting for worship with an attention to business.

A clearness committee to visit with the applicant is either appointed directly by the meeting for business, or (especially in larger meetings) by the meeting's care and counsel committee (or its equivalent). An effort should be made to choose discerning Friends; the applicant's closest associates will not always be the ones best suited for this service.

The clearness committee visits with the applicant in a spirit of expectant waiting and tender searching. Beginning and ending the visit in silent worship is appropriate, as is taking time, during the conversation, to center down and to seek guidance.

The clearness that is sought is two-fold: Is this the right step for the applicant? and, Is this the right step for the meeting? Topics that may help shed light on this include the applicant's knowledge and expectations of the meeting and of Friends generally, their religious background and journey, consonance with our testimonies, and degree of comfort with the variety found among Friends. The following sample queries may be used by the clearness committee to encourage exploration of these topics. No specific answers are to be expected.

- ✿ How does meeting for worship speak to your condition?
- ✿ What drew you to begin attending Friends meeting?
- ✿ What do you consider to be central to Quakerism?
- ✿ Are there any features of Quakerism with which you have reservations or concerns?
- ✿ What changes have you made in your life as a result of your association with Quakers?
- ✿ Are you familiar with Illinois Yearly Meeting's Faith and Practice and other Friends' literature? What have you taken from them?
- ✿ Do you understand that membership in the monthly meeting brings with it membership in the quarterly and yearly meetings?

- ✿ What is your understanding of the Divine? What is your experience of the Divine in your life?
- ✿ Illinois Yearly Meeting and many of its monthly meetings include both Friends who are explicitly Christian and Friends who are not; how comfortable are you with this variety?
- ✿ How will you live into our Quaker peace testimony?
- ✿ How do you understand the concept of community in light of Friends' testimony?
- ✿ What does the testimony of simplicity mean to you and what are the practical consequences of this to your life?
- ✿ What does it mean to live with integrity?
- ✿ How do you live the testimony of equality?
- ✿ In what ways do you see yourself taking on the responsibilities of membership in the meeting? For example: participation in meeting for worship, meeting for worship with an attention to business, committees, stewardship of meeting property and other resources, financial support.
- ✿ As Friends we see our spiritual development as a lifelong journey. Where are you on this journey and what do you think the meeting's role will be in your future spiritual path?

In some circumstances, a single visit with the applicant will be sufficient; in others, multiple visits may seem appropriate. Sometimes the committee will find it helpful to meet together before or after the visit. The clearness committee and the applicant should keep in mind that they seek a solid clarity and easiness about the decision, not any pre-determined result. At times, a solid clearness is reached quickly and easily; other times, clearness comes only after labor, but may be just as strong. Sometimes, the clearness that is reached will be that the time is not right for membership—that the applicant or the meeting is being led to wait. Occasionally the

clearness may be that membership in the Religious Society of Friends is not the Spirit's leading for an applicant. If applicant and committee remember that the goal is the clearness that allows faithful action, then these outcomes can be seen as positive ones.

The clearness committee reports back to the body that appointed it. If this was the care and counsel committee, the report is then forwarded to the monthly meeting for business with a recommendation.

The decision whether to accept a person into membership is made and minuted by the monthly meeting in its meeting for worship with an attention to business. Although the meeting for business needs enough information to make a faithful decision, personal information not directly pertinent to the decision should not be included in the report.

Membership of Children

Children in our midst, regardless of their membership status, should be treated as full participants in the life of the meeting. Meetings do well to nurture all children and young adults in making informed decisions with regard to their membership, when the time is right.

Parents who are members may request membership for their children. Some monthly meetings consider children to be full members. Others consider them to be associate members. Still others offer parents the choice of either full or associate membership for their children. Associate membership differs from full membership in that it does not extend indefinitely, but must be re-affirmed by the individual at some later point. Meetings are responsible for continuing a caring relationship with associate members as they mature, and for encouraging them to apply for full membership when they are ready, whether before or after the end of associate membership.

A request that a child or children be recorded in either category of membership may be made at the time of the child's birth or adoption, or at the time of a parent's acceptance into membership, or later. A child may be recorded at the request of one parent and with the permission of the other. Parents requesting full or associate membership for their children should intend to raise them as Friends within a meeting community. Parents may also choose to request no enrollment for the child, leaving the matter to the young person's own leadings, as they mature. Monthly meetings should adopt clear policies about the membership status of members' children for whom no request is made. The meeting has a responsibility to see that children recorded in membership, along with other children among us, have opportunity to reflect on their commitment as they grow toward adulthood.

Monthly meetings are encouraged to respect and support parents' decisions regarding their children's welfare in these matters. Sometimes (especially when a family of Friends transfers from another meeting) this respect and support will involve wrestling with a category of membership, or a conscientious choice, not previously used in the meeting.

There is no minimum age for applying for membership for oneself. Some young people are ready for membership at an early age; others take longer to mature into a sense of clearness about their spiritual path. Associate members, and young people not recorded in membership, may request full membership for themselves using the procedure described above, at any age at which they feel a leading to do so.

Transfer of Membership, Sojourning Members, Isolated Friends

Members who have moved permanently to another area should transfer their membership to their new meeting. Friends living temporarily at a distance from their home meeting, and near enough to attend another meeting, should usually request sojourning membership in the meeting they are attending. Meetings generally treat Friends sojourning among them as members, but notify their home meeting when they leave the area. These arrangements go beyond record-keeping, allowing the individual to be forthright and honest about their real commitments, and helping meetings care for members in a practical way.

Either change is initiated by requesting a letter from one's previous or home meeting, to the new meeting. The request is considered by the home meeting in its monthly meeting for business, and unless there is compelling reason, a letter recommending the Friend to the new meeting is prepared and signed by the clerk, and forwarded to the new meeting. A sample letter is provided in [Appendix 2](#). The new meeting likewise considers the request in its monthly meeting for business, accepting the transfer or sojourn unless there is a clear reason not to do so. Both meetings should record the decision in their minutes, and should record transfers in their membership records. A home meeting drops a transferring member from its rolls when it receives confirmation that the new meeting has received them into membership.

Both members and persons interested in Friends sometimes live too far away from a meeting to attend regularly. The mere fact of living at a distance from one's meeting does not alter membership. Options for such persons include establishing a relationship with a meeting near enough to visit periodically, participation in quarterly and yearly meetings and conferences of various kinds, and forming a small worship group with others of like mind in the area. Many of the monthly meetings of Illinois Yearly Meeting began in just this way.

Termination of Membership

A person may ask to be released from membership in the Religious Society of Friends, and should do so if they feel strongly out of accord with the faith and practice of Friends. This request takes the form of a letter to the meeting which may be considered in the meeting's care and counsel committee (or its equivalent). When appropriate, a clearness committee may be appointed to meet with the individual. The final decision whether to release the member is made by the monthly meeting for business. In extreme cases a meeting may initiate this process without a letter requesting release, particularly if the member behaves in a way which conveys a false and harmful impression of Friends to the public.

A more common reason for termination of membership is a long-term disengagement from the meeting. Every effort should be made to contact the individual before releasing them from membership. Meetings should explore such situations with real tenderness, taking however much time is necessary. Real-life circumstances are usually ambiguous and difficult to interpret. Friends may drift away until their lives show no evidence of interest in continued membership, yet feel reluctant to break with the past—perhaps for sentimental reasons, but perhaps from a deep, if dormant, sense of calling. Some distance themselves after a conflict in meeting and never fully return; others find that they are led to put their energy exclusively into another spiritual path, yet retain membership. Some Friends may need years to come to clarity about such issues. The underlying truth is often at least a little different from the explanations offered quickly and casually. Sometimes old wounds need to be healed before any real clearness is possible. There is much potential for hurt in inquiring into an inactive member's intentions—but there is also much potential for hurt in ignoring such situations.

When it becomes clear that someone no longer intends involvement with the Religious Society of Friends, the integrity both of the meeting and of the former Friend will generally be best supported by releasing that person from membership. Friends recognize that

faithful pursuit of God's leadings may engage us in outwardly different paths; ideally, a termination of membership can help the former member focus more clearly on the path to which they are actually led. The possibility of affectionate relationship with the meeting community, and with friends within it, is by no means terminated by such action.

Marriage

Marriage being an ordinance affecting all the relations of life, it is affectionately advised that, before any purpose to enter therein, they do humbly ask the counsel of the Lord: and if they have a clear evidence of Divine approval, that they acquaint their parents or guardians with their intentions, and give due heed to their deliberate advice, so that they may be preserved from the dangerous bias of uncertain affection and from the bitter fruit of improper marriages.

Illinois Yearly Meeting, 1878

Marriage, as understood by Friends, is a relation involving two individuals, God, and the religious community that witnesses, recognizes and supports it.

For the individuals joined in marriage, it is a religious calling; it is a commitment of their subsequent lives to serve one another equally, and with earnestly sought Divine assistance to be loving and faithful marriage partners as long as they both shall live. The couple, in effect, calls on God to bless and support their union. But more than this, Quaker procedure requires that they have sought Divine guidance for the marriage. Marriage is then a covenant among God and the two persons who marry one another: God's participation sanctifies the union.

The love of one another to which God calls us is neither a feeling nor a static relationship that one either has or doesn't have; like life, like self, it is always a journey, a work in progress. Marriage involves a mutual commitment to a shared life, following together a path of love requiring growth, integrity, and mutual respect. The religious dimension of marriage is found not only in the understanding that God sanctions the union and strengthens it when we humbly seek together unity in God, but also in the recognition that marriage is a

special opportunity for the practice of that love to which we are more generally called.

A marriage also has a social and public dimension, since it represents a way of living in community; marriage under the care of the meeting establishes a new relationship between the individuals marrying one another and the meeting community that recognizes and cares for it. The wedding is at once the occasion for the couple to enter into matrimony and the meeting's act of witness and loving support of this covenant. There are two important implications that flow from this. First, the meeting needs to be involved in a timely way in the discernment process that leads to the meeting's taking the marriage under its care. Second, the responsibilities of the married couple to the meeting and the meeting to the couple do not end with the completion of the wedding.

The meeting, working through a clearness process, explores with the couple proposing marriage whether to allow the marriage to proceed under its care. Originally, such clearness processes were intended to ascertain whether there were any impediments to the marriage, for example other marriage commitments that would be incompatible with the proposed marriage, and any impediments to the meeting's taking the marriage under its care, such as failure to accept Friends' discipline. For example, in 1682 the Upperville of Bucks Monthly Meeting (England) did not allow a marriage under its care because the young man involved refused to appear before the women's meeting for business, contrary to the order of Friends then established. These two aspects of clearness still remain: whether there are any impediments that would preclude a proper marriage and whether there are any impediments to the meeting's taking the proposed marriage under its care. A third function served by the clearness process is to discern whether the two individuals wishing to marry understand that the relationship into which they would be entering has a religious dimension. In modern times, clearness committees have also come to assist the couple to examine whether they have reservations they have inadequately acknowledged or

examined, or whether there are problem areas that they, as a couple, have not carefully considered together.

The wedding itself, conducted under the supervision of a designated committee of the meeting, is a meeting for worship called for the purpose of marriage. In the unprogrammed tradition of Friends, to which Illinois Yearly Meeting belongs, there is no minister whose office is to marry the two persons entering matrimony. Instead, the two with all those gathered for the occasion settle into silent, waiting worship. When the two are moved by the Spirit, they rise and taking one another by the hand proclaim their commitment to one another “in the presence of God and before these our friends,” as the traditional language has it. They sign a certificate that relates the taking of their vows, and worship continues, with those present offering such messages suitable to the occasion as are given to them. At the conclusion of the meeting, all those present are invited to sign the certificate in witness thereto.

There are two aspects to the meeting’s role in the marriage after the clearness process: assistance in planning the wedding in the manner of Friends, and care of the marriage following the wedding. Meetings continue to bear responsibility to support the marriages under their care and the individuals who married. Thus it is expected that the meeting know well at least one of the two who have applied for marriage, and typically that at least one be a member of the Religious Society of Friends, if not of the meeting itself. (State law may require this for the Quaker wedding to have legal status.)

Many Friends meetings, including a number in Illinois Yearly Meeting, have taken marriages of same-sex couples under their care. For all marriages the procedure is the same, and the same care should be extended for the couple.

Marriage Procedure

The process for marriage under the care of the meeting starts with a letter from the couple, signed by both, to the meeting stating the intention of marriage and asking to be married under the care of the meeting. The letter may include a tentative date; couples are cautioned that Friends' process typically takes several months.

The clerk reads the letter of request to the monthly meeting for business, which may then either appoint a clearness committee directly or refer this request to the meeting's care and counsel or analogous committee to appoint a clearness committee. Whichever body appoints the clearness committee should carefully consider the particular circumstances and characteristics of the couple in choosing members of the committee.

The clearness process may take several meetings and may need to begin with an explanation of the process, as it may be unfamiliar or intimidating to some. The clearness committee meets with the couple and helps them explore the issues of a life together. It also has the responsibility of seeing if there are impediments to proceeding with the marriage. Since the wedding vows come out of Friends' principles and the couple's understanding of what they are agreeing to in marrying, it is appropriate for the content of the vows to be considered with the clearness committee. (The next section has suggestions on questions and issues to consider in the clearness process. The section afterward has examples of vows.)

When the clearness committee is ready, it reports back to the monthly meeting or to the care and counsel committee, which makes its recommendation to the monthly meeting. If the monthly meeting then approves the marriage under its care, it appoints an arrangements committee, which is charged with working with the couple to see that the wedding is conducted consistently with Friends' principles and to help with the many details. At this point the date can be finalized and the arrangements can be made for the wedding.

The meeting should be prepared to work with couples where one of the individuals may not be a member of the meeting or even a

Friend. Sometimes the wedding is to occur far from the home meeting or it may include multiple monthly meetings. Care should be taken in coordinating the various responsibilities among those involved. Situations like this may make the process take longer and require that the meeting prayerfully discern how to assist the couple.

The wedding celebration should reflect Friends' testimonies of simplicity, community, integrity, and equality. In light of this, the arrangements committee reviews the couple's wording of the vows and the certificate. When there are other traditions to be incorporated (for instance if only one of the couple is a Friend), the arrangements committee needs to be flexible and sensitive both to Friends' principles and to others' cultural and religious experiences.

The arrangements committee helps the couple with plans for the ceremony and celebration. It assists the couple in arranging for preparation of the certificate using archival quality materials, making sure that there are pens with acid-free indelible ink for use in signing it, supervising the signing of the certificate and making sure that it gets back to the couple after the wedding. The arrangements committee should assist the couple in handling legal issues related to the wedding. Legal requirements may vary by state; the committee is advised to check with local county officials. The couple and the arrangements committee should make sure someone is designated to read the certificate, to close the meeting, and to sign and submit any legal documents. A minute from the meeting designating a Friend or Friends to sign and submit legal documents is advisable.

The wedding itself is a meeting for worship. While members of the meeting (who should be welcome) will know what to expect, invited guests may not, so care should be taken to let them know what is going to happen.

Right after the wedding there are often some refreshments for those at the wedding. Many meetings have a potluck dinner. Some may also have a smaller reception at a separate location.

The arrangements committee should report back to the monthly meeting that the wedding was successfully accomplished and see that a copy or transcript of the certificate has been placed in the meeting's records. After the wedding, the meeting has a responsibility to care for the marriage, continuing to hold the couple in the Light.

Possible queries for the clearness for marriage process

The queries provided below may be used to assist Friends who are seeking marriage under the care of the meeting as they prayerfully consider their decision. Their purpose is to encourage communication between the couple on topics relevant to aspects of their relationship. Couples are not expected to provide the committee with private details of their relationship, but it is hoped that this process will ensure that the couple has considered such issues together prior to their marriage. Developing effective communication is important because not all challenges in a marriage can be anticipated.

The questions below are meant to serve as examples only—the couple and the committee discern what questions to consider in their sessions together. Queries not discussed with the committee may be provided to the couple for their consideration.

- ✿ Have you sought Divine guidance in your decision to marry?
- ✿ How will you make marriage a sacred and lifelong relationship?
- ✿ Have you discussed with each other your religious beliefs and the role they will have in your life together? How do you expect your faith to inform your decision-making as a couple? Have you discussed the religious upbringing of any children you may have?
- ✿ How do you nurture your relationship? How will you uphold and strengthen the relationship with the passage of time?
- ✿ How do you communicate with each other? What are sources of potential conflicts between you? When conflicts arise, how do

you handle them?

- ✿ Have you discussed how you will make decisions as a couple?
- ✿ Have you discussed what each of you will bring to the relationship, including practical issues in the maintenance of a household?
- ✿ Have you discussed your expectations of sexuality in marriage?
- ✿ Have you discussed whether you want to have children? How large a family do you envision? How soon do you anticipate having children? What are your expectations about how you will raise, discipline, and educate your children?
- ✿ Have you discussed whether either or both of you will change your names and have you discussed what last name any children will have?
- ✿ If either of you has children, have you considered the impact of this marriage on them?
- ✿ Have you discussed how you will balance the needs of your marriage with your friendships and responsibilities outside the home (for example, work, volunteer activities, education)?
- ✿ Have you discussed how your finances will be managed? Do you have similar expectations about income, saving, spending and borrowing?
- ✿ If there may be situations in which this marriage will not be legally recognized, have you discussed how to protect each other's legal rights?
- ✿ How will you support each other through times of trial, unexpected life changes, or unfulfilled hopes and dreams? Are you willing to listen together for spiritual guidance when you face a problem without a clear answer and/or ask for a clearness committee?
- ✿ Are you willing to postpone personal fulfillment if your spouse is not ready for what that might entail?

- ✿ What do you expect your relationship with the meeting to be in your life as a couple?
- ✿ How could the meeting support your marriage in the years to come?
- ✿ Do either of you have emotional or other commitments to a third person which would interfere with this marriage?
- ✿ Have you examined your own patterns of behavior in previous relationships, and considered how they might need to change as you enter this marriage?
- ✿ Has any legal divorce been finalized?
- ✿ What are the views of your families regarding the marriage?
- ✿ Have you discussed how you intend to keep close relations with family who may live far away (especially in cases of illness or old age)?
- ✿ Do you have an understanding of the cultural, religious, and language background of your partner?
- ✿ Have you discussed any issues from your lives to this point that might affect your marriage?
- ✿ Have you discussed practices to sustain your marriage?

Possible wording for vows and certificate

With the help of the arrangements committee the couple should agree on the text of the vows and the certificate. Below are general principles that need to be included and two examples of each: one traditional and historical and another more contemporary. Either of these may be modified or the couple may compose their own text.

In keeping with the Quaker testimony of equality both parties in a marriage make the same promises. The vows are not elaborate. They should state clearly that the two individuals are marrying each other, and promise to be loving and faithful to each other as long as they

both shall live. The vows acknowledge the religious or spiritual dimension of the marriage and the importance of the gathered community.

Historical (From Book of Discipline of the Religious Society of Friends, adopted by Illinois Yearly Meeting, 1927):

“In the presence of God and before these our friends, I, _____, take thee, _____, to be my wife (husband), promising, with Divine assistance, to be unto thee a loving and faithful husband (wife) as long as we both shall live.”

Contemporary:

“In the presence of God and these our Friends, I, _____, commit myself to you, _____, in marriage, promising with Divine assistance to be a loving and faithful partner (husband, wife) to you as long as we both shall live.”

Suggestions for the certificate:

The certificate must include the names of the individuals being married, date and location of the wedding, meeting under whose care it is occurring, the substance of the vows, and space for signatures of the couple and of those attending. This is an important record of the marriage, not just a keepsake.

Historical (From Rules of Discipline and Advices of Illinois Yearly Meeting 1878):

Whereas, _____ (man's name), of _____ (town), in the county of _____, and State of _____, son of _____ and _____, his wife, of _____, in the county of _____, in the State of _____, and _____ (woman's name), daughter of _____ and _____, his wife, of _____, in the county of _____, and State of _____, having informed _____ Meeting of the Society of Friends, that they intend marriage with each other, and no obstruction appearing, (consent of parents or guardians being given, if the parties are minors,) their proposal of marriage was allowed by said meeting.

This is to certify, that in the accomplishment of their marriage, this _____ day of _____ month, in the year _____, the said _____ (man's name) and _____ (woman's name) appeared at (here state the meeting place or residence where the marriage is accomplished), and in the presence of a committee of said meeting and other witnesses, the said _____ (man's name) took the said _____ (woman's name) by the hand and declared that he took her to be his wife, promising to be to her a faithful and affectionate husband until death should separate them; and she the said _____ did in like manner declare that she took him the said _____ to be her husband, promising to be to him a faithful and affectionate wife until death should separate them, they did then and there sign their names to this certificate, she in accordance with custom assuming the family name of her husband.

(Man's name) _____
_____.

(Woman's name)
_____.

And we having been present at the solemnization of the said marriage, have subscribed our names as witnesses thereto.

Contemporary:

Having felt the call to marry each other, _____ and _____, whose parents are _____ and _____ of _____ and _____ and _____ of _____, sought and received the approval of _____ Monthly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends to marry under the care of that meeting. To accomplish that end a meeting for worship was held on the _____ day of _____ month, _____ at _____. During that meeting _____ rose and said that (insert wording of vow here). _____ then said that (insert wording of vow here).

_____ and _____ signed here witnessing their promises to each other:

And we, being present, signed as witnesses:

Care of Marriages

Strong marriage relationships contribute to the strength and spiritual growth of the meeting community. At the same time, “marriage is recognized to be not an easy bond, but a high calling.” Friends are aware that care for a marriage, therefore, goes beyond the clearness process and the wedding to include an ongoing relationship with the couple. Indeed, the meeting is enriched by all marriages in the community and benefits by providing care and

attention to each marriage whether or not the wedding was conducted under the care of the meeting.

Married Friends have testified to the value of their participation together in the life of the meeting, of the opportunities provided by a supportive community to deepen their spiritual fellowship and love. In keeping with Friends' understanding of marriage, it is helpful for a meeting to be careful to treat each partner in a marriage as a valued individual and to honor their union.

The meeting also bears responsibility to care for marriages in which only one of the couple is an active participant in the meeting. The meeting should welcome both as equal partners in the marriage and provide care and support as the opportunity arises.

There is no formula for proper care of marriages, nor any tradition of formal mechanisms for doing so. Meetings are encouraged to be mindful of the importance of marriages, children, and families to the meeting community and to seek ways to support them, as it seeks ways to support and nurture all the individuals within the meeting.

Meetings need to be aware that there are a variety of life changes that may create stress in marriages. Eventually most couples will encounter serious illness or disability of one of the couple, a child, or parents; employment transitions; changing financial circumstances; aging; and death in the family. Couples may also face stresses from religious differences, changing perception of gender identity or sexual orientation, change of calling, or service commitments, among others.

Care of a marriage may be in the form of regular interaction with the couple by designated members of the meeting (a marriage care committee). This committee may be the regular care and counsel or pastoral care committee of the meeting, the couple's marriage clearness or arrangements committee, a specially designated committee, or a group of couples providing mutual support. A marriage care committee meets regularly with the couple, taking care to be supportive, not intrusive. The committee celebrates the growth

of the marriage relationship with the couple and nurtures the couple's spiritual life. These celebrations are an acknowledgement of the many small events that contribute to a strong relationship. The connection between the marriage care committee and the couple provides an opportunity within the meeting community for the couple to obtain pastoral assistance about any problem before it becomes overwhelming.

Another aspect of this relationship is that it provides contacts within the meeting community who are knowledgeable about life changes that affect a marriage. Members of a care committee assist the couple during the various stages of a marriage. Some on the committee may be parents and will be able to share with them about the effects of children on a marriage. If no one on the care committee has experience with a particular life change, the committee may be able to assist the couple in connecting with meeting members who are knowledgeable or appropriate counselors.

Providing religious education, child care, and fellowship opportunities for children of all ages is an important part of support for couples with children. In addition, meetings can support couples by having books in meeting libraries about marriage, encouraging participation in marriage enrichment workshops, sharing meals in small groups, and maintaining a relationship with couples so they feel comfortable to seek assistance. A called meeting for worship at the request of a couple to celebrate their marriage on an important anniversary is one way that they and the meeting can lift up and support an enduring marriage.

Today married couples often move away from the monthly meeting that had the care for their marriage. This means that they are not close to those that have helped them with determining clearness about marrying. The meeting's responsibility for the marriage does not end when the couple moves away. If there is a meeting close to their new residence, the meeting normally writes a letter of introduction to that meeting. This letter could include a request to take the marriage under its care if the couple so wishes. If there is

not a meeting close to the couple, then the marriage care committee that has worked with them can maintain long-distance support for the couple.

Meetings will also need to take on the care for marriages of couples that join the meeting or begin attending. This can become a part of welcoming the couple into participation in the meeting community.

Separation and Divorce

Clearness committees for divorce could serve the same purposes as clearness committees for marriage. If couples in love may be blind to their incompatibilities, couples in trouble may be blind to latent possibilities in their relationship...

Bob Blood, 1972

In today's society many marriages result in separation or divorce. These situations present challenges to Quaker meetings as they seek to show care and support for the couple and their children.

If there is a conflict within a marriage, the couple is encouraged to seek assistance early, long before differences become irreconcilable. This may take the form of a request to meet with the marriage care committee, the establishment of a clearness committee, or counseling. Meetings are advised to recognize their role as providing spiritual support. If there is a need for professional counseling, this assistance should be sought outside the meeting. Care and counsel committees are encouraged to maintain a list of qualified counselors outside the meeting who understand Quaker values, as a reference for couples who may desire confidential professional help.

It is important that the meeting be open to both sides when there is conflict in a relationship and ensure that both partners feel welcome

at meeting for worship. Members of the meeting and especially the care and counsel or marriage care committee should make every effort to keep lines of communication open between the parties and to avoid blaming the individuals. The meeting's role is to support the couple as they grow in God's love, but not to determine whether the marriage will be terminated.

When there are children involved, the meeting should take care to ensure that they are welcome and feel the loving support of the meeting. Friends should be aware that children may feel bewildered, blame themselves for the difficulties their parents are experiencing, or feel caught in the middle. If a child asks for a clearness committee, this should be provided. If the child attends First Day School, the teacher is encouraged to listen to the child's concerns. If it seems advisable, the teacher may recommend counseling for the child to the parents or seek assistance from the care and counsel committee in supporting the child.

If following a period of separation, and seeking spiritual support from the meeting and professional counseling, the couple recognizes that the most loving response is a divorce, the couple may want to meet with a clearness committee to consider how the meeting can support them during the divorce proceedings and after the divorce is final. This could include practical support such as assistance with housing, jobs, and childcare; emotional support as the individuals deal with the transition; and spiritual support. If desired, the couple may request a called meeting for worship during which they each rise and ask God's support in releasing each other from their marriage commitment.

Queries

For the meeting:

- ✿ Does the meeting have open discussions about marriage and divorce in which all can share their views?

- ✿ Does the care and counsel committee actively and sensitively reach out to persons or couples who may be troubled?
- ✿ If a couple so desires, can the care and counsel committee provide a list of professional counselors who understand Friends' views?
- ✿ Does the care and counsel committee know divorce mediators or lawyers who will seek to avoid adversarial positions and assist the couple in finding the least detrimental and most economical means to legally end a marriage, if that is their decision?
- ✿ Can the meeting as a community reach out in love to all persons involved, accepting the couple's decision without being judgmental, helping them to grow past their animosities, and providing practical assistance (such as locating new housing, childcare arrangements, etc.)?
- ✿ If the meeting finds itself too emotionally involved to help, will it consider calling on another monthly meeting, quarterly meeting, or yearly meeting for resource persons?

For those who are divorcing:

- ✿ Do I seek to keep God's love as a vital force in my life to help me deal with the changes that come with divorce?
- ✿ Do I avoid hurting my former spouse in my relationships with others, either in or out of the meeting?

For divorcees with children:

- ✿ Am I committed to the reality that we are both still parents of our children and must continue to find creative ways of living this responsibility?
- ✿ Am I mindful of our children's pain and suffering? Can I avoid both shutting our children out of my own pain and leaning on them too much?

- ✿ Am I mindful of the needs of our children for a continuing loving relationship with each of us?
- ✿ Am I mindful of the special love between children and grandparents or extended family and do I endeavor to further strengthen these ties?

For relatives:

- ✿ If I have a warm relationship with an in-law, can I preserve it with patience and creativity during and after the separation without exerting undue pressure on anyone involved?
- ✿ Do I give loving support and encouragement, and avoid giving unwelcome advice?
- ✿ Am I mindful of the needs of each member of the couple?

Recognizing Spiritual Gifts and Leadings

All Friends are called into a ministry sooner or later, whether public or private, in word or deed or silent prayer, of long duration or short.

Lloyd Lee Wilson, 1993

All Friends are called to minister to others, but not all are called to do so in the same way. Offering a vocal message during meeting for worship is the best-known form of Quaker ministry, but it is far from the only one. Ministry may involve caring for those who are ill, teaching First Day School, or helping with hospitality for the meeting's events. These forms of ministry rarely call for formal recognition, but they serve to deepen the covenant community that is at the core of every Friends meeting.

Ministry is most effective when it takes place in accordance with one's gifts and leadings. In Quaker parlance, a "gift" is a God-given ability that is intended to be used for spiritual purposes, while a "leading" is a call to action based on a Friend's sense that God has led them to take on a particular cause, for example pastoral counseling or chaplaincy in a prison or hospital. Such leadings typically emerge as a result of prayerful consideration of a concern, and they often reflect the gifts of the person who is led to act on them.

In some cases, a gift or leading may call for special recognition and/or support from a Friend's home meeting. Historically, this occurred when a meeting formally acknowledged that one of its members had a gift of spoken ministry and saw fit to "record" that Friend as a minister. Early Quakers felt called to support such

members spiritually and practically, often “releasing” those recorded ministers so that they could travel in the ministry for the benefit of the entire Religious Society of Friends. In Illinois Yearly Meeting nowadays, few meetings record ministers, but some do; and many more formally recognize and support the leadings of their members without recording them as ministers.

Some meetings within Illinois Yearly Meeting have adopted procedures regarding recognition of leadings and/or recording of ministers, and others might wish to do so. In all cases, such procedures should be regarded as suggestive rather than definitive: while they often prove to be helpful, they cannot replace prayerful discernment by the meeting community.

Recognition of Leadings: The Clearness Process and Queries

Monthly meetings are occasionally called upon to discern whether to formally recognize the leading of an individual Friend. Such recognition means that the meeting agrees to take that leading under its care. A Friend who wishes to have the meeting take a leading under its care engages in the meeting’s processes of spiritual discernment, which normally involve the meeting’s care and counsel committee. (See “[Care and counsel committee](#).”)

A clearness committee appointed by the care and counsel committee (or by the meeting as a whole, if the monthly meeting is too small to have such a committee) undertakes discernment on whether the Friend in question is rightly led, and thus whether the meeting should support the leading. This discernment is to be undertaken in the manner of Friends, that is, as a shared search for God’s will until clarity has been reached. While no prescribed set of questions or approaches is fitting for all situations, the committee might consider discussing with the Friend queries such as the following:

- * What is the nature of the leading?
- * What gifts are necessary to follow the leading?
- * Is this the right time for you to follow the leading?
- * Are there aspects of the leading that you are still seeking to clarify, and for which the meeting can offer assistance?
- * What challenges do you expect to face? How can the meeting help you handle those challenges?
- * If the meeting provides you with formal recognition, will that help to advance the leading? How so?
- * How will following the leading affect your spiritual journey?
- * How might following the leading deepen the spiritual life of the meeting community?
- * How will following the leading affect your other responsibilities, including your responsibilities to the meeting?
- * What kind of spiritual and practical support will you need in order to follow the leading? How much of that support do you expect the meeting to provide?

Once the clearness committee has completed its discernment process, it reports its findings to the body which appointed it, taking care to note any assistance that the led individual might need if the leading is to be taken under the meeting's care. This assistance involves spiritual nurturing and provisions for a travel companion if the leading involves travel. It might also include measures such as financial support, communication to bodies for which recognition of the leading may serve as a professional endorsement (see 'Letters of Endorsement' below), and/or release of the Friend from responsibilities to the monthly meeting for some period of time. If the report is made to the care and counsel committee, this committee then forwards it to the monthly meeting with a recommendation.

The meeting as a body then decides whether to take the leading under its care. This discernment should involve not only the meeting's sense of whether the leading is a true one, but also the fit between the meeting's needs and resources and those of the led individual. This means that the meeting should query itself concerning its readiness to take the leading under its care, just as the clearness committee has queried the led Friend.

Anyone whose leading has been formally recognized is expected to confer regularly with a support committee selected by the meeting's care and counsel committee. The support committee acts on behalf of the meeting in helping the Friend stay grounded in the Spirit as the leading continues to unfold. It is advisable for the led individual to offer a report on the leading to the meeting on at least an annual basis. This provides an opportunity for both the individual and the meeting to grow and deepen their spiritual lives.

Recording of Ministers

In addition to supporting leadings, Friends meetings sometimes choose to record ministers, although this practice has become less prevalent over time. Illinois Yearly Meeting has not made use of it since the early 20th century, but monthly meetings within the yearly meeting are welcome to decide whether they are led to do so.

As with the recognition of leadings, the recording of ministers involves spiritual discernment of God's will on the part of the meeting community. Unlike recognition of leadings, however, it is generally the meeting itself rather than the led Friend who initiates the proposal that a Friend be recorded as a minister. The recording of a minister is also generally intended to be enduring, unlike recognition of a leading, which may end after completion of a particular set of activities. This distinction is approximate, and will depend on the circumstances and on discernment by the meeting community.

The recording of a minister does not confer greater status or more privileges upon that Friend than on any other. On the contrary, it involves significant responsibility, for the recorded minister should expect to be held to a high standard.

[W]e do believe and affirm that some are more particularly called to the work of the ministry, and therefore are fitted of the Lord for that purpose...and that... there is something more incumbent upon them in that respect than upon every common believer._

Robert Barclay, 1678

In undertaking discernment concerning the recording of ministers, monthly meetings may wish to consult sources other than this Faith and Practice, including books of Faith and Practice of other yearly meetings that record ministers. They may also wish to contact Friends from monthly meetings, particularly those meetings within Illinois Yearly Meeting that have already undertaken such discernment.

As with recognized leadings, recorded ministers should confer regularly, preferably in person, with a support committee appointed by their meeting, and should offer regular reports on their ministry. The meeting should recognize that it has the authority to lay down a ministry as well as to recognize one. All such decisions should be taken seriously and prayerfully.

Preparing for Discernment of Gifts and Leadings

It can be helpful for monthly meetings to prepare themselves for requests involving leadings and ministries. In part this involves simply being aware that such requests may occur, and that they may reflect God's will concerning various members of the meeting

community. However, the meeting might also wish to consider how it might handle requests of this kind before they come about.

While general procedures for discernment concerning leadings are outlined in the “Recognition of Leadings” subsection above, those procedures might not be adequate for all meetings and all types of leadings. For that reason, meetings without formal processes regarding requests for recognition of leadings might wish to consider developing them. In so doing, the care and counsel committee should consider asking other ILYM meetings whether they have approved procedures on those matters that can be used as appropriate in developing their own.

If a meeting discerns that it is willing to record ministers, it might find it desirable to adopt formal procedures for initiating and terminating recognition of ministries. If so, those procedures should take into account the case of a Friend who transfers membership into the meeting after having been recorded as a minister in another Quaker meeting or church. The meeting will then be prepared for such situations if and when they arise. Again, the presence of such procedures is intended to enhance, rather than to exclude, discernment by the meeting community.

Travel Minutes, Letters of Endorsement, and Letters of Introduction

Under special circumstances which are often related to spiritual gifts and leadings, a monthly meeting may see fit to issue a letter to an individual Friend. The various types of letters are indicated and explained below.

Travel minutes

If a recognized leading involves travel outside of one's home meeting, the monthly meeting must first approve of that travel. If it chooses to do so, a designated member of the meeting, usually the clerk, is expected to provide the led individual with a *travel minute*. A travel minute is a brief letter that indicates the meeting's approval of the leading and requests that hosting Friends offer loving care to the visitor.

It is customary for travel minutes to be read aloud in the meeting that is being visited, usually directly after meeting for worship or at the beginning of the business meeting or other event in which the visiting Friend participates. The clerk or representative of the visited meeting then endorses the travel minute, noting the date of the visit and offering a return greeting to the issuing meeting. Most endorsements also attest to the faithfulness of the traveling Friend. Travelers are expected to return their travel minute to their meeting when they return home.

Sample travel minutes are provided in [Appendix 3](#).

Letters of endorsement

A special case of leadings involves Friends who wish to serve in a professional capacity for which they need an endorsement from a recognized religious community (in addition to other credentials, usually those of a professional nature). This occurs most regularly in the case of pastoral counselors, chaplains, and others who provide psychological and theological guidance in settings such as hospitals, prisons, nursing homes, rehabilitation facilities, and residential care facilities, usually in an interfaith environment. In such cases, the monthly meeting's discernment with respect to the Friend's leading must take into account the type of endorsement that is required. The meeting's endorsement does not certify or imply professional qualification, but rather supports the Friend in undertaking service for which a religious endorsement is required in addition to any professional credentials. The meeting should be sensitive to any deadlines involved with respect to the role in question, treating the

request in a manner that recognizes those deadlines while maintaining Quaker processes of discernment.

If the meeting elects to take under its care the leading of a Friend who wishes to serve in a professional capacity of this sort, it authorizes the issuing of a letter of endorsement to that Friend. That individual and the meeting should decide upon a mutual process for periodic [reporting on the Friend's ministry](#). The meeting should be aware that re-endorsement may sometimes be necessary for certification purposes, depending on the requirements of the organization in which the Friend is serving.

Letters of introduction

Friends or regular attenders who plan to visit another Friends meeting(s), whether as part of their travel plans or due to relocation to another area, are welcome to request a *letter of introduction* from the clerk of their monthly meeting even if they are not visiting the other meeting(s) on the basis of a recognized leading or recorded ministry. A letter of introduction identifies its bearer as a member of a meeting community, extends greetings from that community to the receiving meeting, and asks that hosting Friends cordially welcome the traveler. (See also "[Transfer of Membership, Sojourning Members, Isolated Friends](#).")

Pastoral Care

Quakers regard all individuals in their meeting community as “members one of another” (Romans 12:5). As Friends, we regard ourselves as being called to care for each other’s spiritual, emotional, and physical well-being. The traditional term for this form of ministry is “pastoral care.” For Quakers in Illinois Yearly Meeting, pastoral care is the collective responsibility of the entire body, especially the local meeting community.

Pastoral care begins when we recognize the needs of our fellow worshippers. We do this by coming to know one another deeply and by listening to each other actively and lovingly. Every encounter, whether at the meetinghouse or elsewhere, is an opportunity for us to learn about the needs of others and to respond to those needs.

The spiritual welfare of a meeting is greatly helped if its social life is vigorous, and members take a warm personal interest in one another’s welfare. The pastoral work of the Society is specially committed to [the Care and Counsel Committee], but our members should generally not allow themselves to feel that they are relieved from responsibility. In the greater events of life, such as marriage, birth of a child, illness or death, it is our duty and privilege to share in one another’s joys and sorrows; and sympathy thus shown is a potent means of binding us in closer fellowship.

London Yearly Meeting, 1925

Pastoral care often takes place informally, as a natural consequence of our concern for one another. When Friends find that informal means of care are insufficient for a particular situation calling for pastoral care, they should bring that issue to the [care and counsel](#) or similar committee or to the meeting as a whole if there is no

committee for such matters. Members of the committee that undertakes pastoral care are expected to take a personal interest in the spiritual, emotional, and physical welfare of each member and regular attender in the meeting, thus assuring that everyone within the meeting community is supported in difficult times. (Ministry to individuals outside of the meeting community is also of concern to Friends, but it is not normally referred to as “pastoral care.”)

Situations for which pastoral care might be in order are discussed elsewhere in this Faith & Practice, including [misconduct in the meeting](#) and [death and bereavement](#), among others. Individuals who are not members of the committee that undertakes pastoral care are encouraged to bring such issues to the attention of that committee, particularly when they discern that their individual gifts are not likely to be sufficient to deal with the issue at hand.

In order to undertake responsibility for pastoral care, members of the care and counsel committee are encouraged to:

- ✿ acquaint themselves with all members and attenders in order to keep informed about their various needs for personal encouragement and assistance;
- ✿ inform others, as appropriate, if there are needs for which the meeting can be helpful;
- ✿ communicate with any Friend whose relationship with the meeting has gone amiss;
- ✿ facilitate communication between individual Friends and the meeting’s official structures for clearness and support.

The care and counsel committee is expected to undertake pastoral care with humility, tact, and discretion. This involves the ability to listen carefully and tenderly, to “speak the truth in love,” to maintain confidentiality, and to refrain from giving advice unless asked. Gifts of insight, experience, and emotional maturity are especially helpful.

The humility with which the care and counsel committee is called to carry out its work includes acknowledging any limitations in its abilities and resources. It is therefore beneficial for the committee to be aware of the presence of gifts and expertise among the members and attenders of the meeting.

In cases in which the care and counsel committee discerns that the meeting's resources are insufficient for a particular concern, it may wish to refer the Friend(s) under its care to an outside organization that provides practical or material assistance, counseling, or other services. The committee is urged to inform itself about the availability of such services and to keep an up-to-date directory with contact information on the organizations that offer them.

The role of the care and counsel committee, while important, should not detract from the responsibility of the entire meeting community concerning pastoral care. As "members one of another," Friends are called to take this responsibility seriously and to undertake it tenderly. Even when primary assistance for someone in the meeting community is beyond the resources of that community, committees or individuals within the meeting might be able to offer a caring presence as well as practical support in matters such as transportation, meals, or childcare. While it is important that Friends do not "outrun their guide" in attempting to provide care in ways for which they are not equipped, it is equally important that we endeavor to act in support of each other as the Spirit leads.

I have come to know that one essential ingredient is to recognize that we are not responsible for fixing the situation. Except for the few situations in which provision of some material aid is needed, we are not likely to be able to resolve the situation, but rather to be with the person or family in the midst of it... We are called to be instruments for the work of the living God; we are called to be channels through which the Spirit can move.

Arlene Kelly, 1993

Queries

- ✿ Does our meeting provide care and encouragement to everyone in the meeting community?
- ✿ How does our meeting keep in touch with all its members?
- ✿ Is our meeting welcoming to newcomers?
- ✿ How does our meeting address conflict?
- ✿ How does our meeting respond when a member of the meeting community's conduct is a cause for concern?

Preparing for and Responding to Injury, Illness, Death, and Bereavement

Death is no more than a turning of us over from time to eternity. Death, then, being the way and condition of life, we cannot love to live, if we cannot bear to die.

William Penn, 1693

Quakers do have something very special to offer the dying and the bereaved, namely that we are at home in silence. Not only are we thoroughly used to it and unembarrassed by it, but we know something about sharing it, encountering others in its depths, and above all, letting ourselves be used in it... People so often talk about someone “getting over” a death. How could you ever fully get over a deep loss? Life has been changed profoundly and irrevocably. You don’t get over sorrow; you work your way right to the centre of it.

Diana Lampen, 1979

Preparing for Injury, Illness, and Death

Injuries are often unexpected, and an individual who has suffered one may be unable to care for herself or himself for a period of time, or even permanently. Serious illness, including mental illness, can also occur at any time. Either injury or illness may require an extended period for recovery and rehabilitation, or may even result

in death. In either case there will be a need for support from the meeting.

Meetings are urged to prepare in advance for serious illness or injury of members and attenders. This preparation, often organized by the care and counsel or similar committee, includes establishing ways to provide spiritual and practical support for those who are ill or injured as well as for their family and loved ones. Practical support may be in the form of transportation to medical appointments and visits, preparing meals, shopping, providing respite time for caregivers, and/or childcare. The form and provision of practical support will vary depending on the size of the meeting, the geographical spread of the meeting community, and the available support from outside the meeting. Spiritual support may include deep listening as well as holding meetings for worship with the individual and loved ones in a hospital, nursing/rehabilitation facility, or their home. All support should be provided in a manner that respects the dignity of the individual.

Adult Friends have a responsibility to prepare for serious illness which may lead to death. While this work can be emotionally difficult, Friends are urged to execute legal documents that express their wishes and intentions, such as a medical power of attorney for someone to make decisions for them if they cannot, a durable power of attorney for someone to take care of financial and other matters if and when they are incapacitated, a living will stating their wishes about the extent of treatment, a last will and testament (or revocable trust) that arranges for care of dependents and disbursement of assets, and a document arranging for disposition of the body after death. These documents should be revisited whenever there are life changes such as marriage, the birth or adoption of a child, the death of a life partner, a move out of state, or a significant inheritance. A clearness committee can be helpful in deciding what goes into these documents.

Preparing for illness and death also involves providing information to those who have been given responsibility for making decisions

that are in accordance with the wishes of the individual as well as others whose lives will be affected. Meetings may want to provide periodic opportunities for members to discuss the spiritual and practical issues that arise around serious medical challenges and the end of life. In some meetings, the care and counsel committee or its equivalent maintains a file of Friends' end-of-life wishes so that the meeting can help support those who are ill and their loved ones, or for the purpose of arranging a memorial service. This file may also include information about whom to contact in case of emergency or other information that is seen as relevant by the individual establishing the file.

Support of the Bereaved

Death often faces us with the most difficult questions, yet it may be the occasion of our most profound insights into the meaning of life. As Friends seek to surround the bereaved with love and care, the sustaining power of God can bring to all concerned not only courage but a transforming truth about death and life itself. Although life instinctively avoids death, death is not the opposite of life. It is essential to the ongoing, changing nature of life.

North Pacific Yearly Meeting, 1993

Once a member or attender of a meeting has died, the meeting should reach out to the family and loved ones, whether near or far. The meeting should be able to provide listening support to the family and loved ones of the deceased, as well as other forms of pastoral care as needed. It may be useful for the meeting to designate particular individuals or a committee to provide ongoing listening and spiritual support.

As we support those who are grieving, we should bear in mind that there is no single path for moving through grief. Those who provide

support for the bereaved should be aware that in some respects grief for the loss of a loved one never ends. There will be moments when the person who has died is just the one we wish to speak with about an experience, and the sense of loss will arise fresh again. The grieving process provides an opportunity for spiritual growth for all concerned. Friends need to support each other in the process of grieving. When the person who has died has been an important part of the meeting, the entire community will be grieving, and the meeting needs to provide an atmosphere where all feel able to express their grief openly. Meetings will want to have literature and knowledge of community resources about issues concerning death and bereavement available.

Special attention needs to be focused on the children or the child siblings of a Friend who has died. Children need a secure and empathetic environment in which to express their grief. The meeting may wish to consider art projects, special storybooks, or even a memorial meeting for the benefit of the bereaved children, including their friends and classmates.

Memorial Meetings

It is customary to have a memorial meeting for worship, sometimes referred to as a celebration of life, for a Friend who has died. Illinois Yearly Meeting's Ministry and Advancement Committee has prepared a "[Memorial Meeting Preparation Checklist](#)" to assist meetings in planning memorial meetings for worship.

Typically, a memorial meeting for worship will include people who are not familiar with worship in the manner of Friends. This means that someone, usually the clerk, will rise shortly after the start of the memorial service and explain a Quaker memorial meeting for worship. A brief written explanation is often made available.

Gathering together in waiting worship provides an opportunity for all present to remember and hold in prayer the deceased. Out of the silence, individuals may feel called to share messages about the life of the person who died. The messages may focus on the spiritual impact of the Friend's life, or they may be stories about the Friend. Speakers may also share a poem, a song, a Bible verse, or another passage that has special meaning for them at this time. All those present are welcome to speak, allowing a period of silence to frame any spoken message so that all can feel the effect of what has been shared.

Those attending the memorial meeting may find themselves laughing as well as crying as they hear about the deceased individual's life. Many will leave the memorial meeting with a sense that they have come to know the person better because of the spoken messages. The worshipping community may feel a sense of releasing the Friend who has died.

Following the memorial meeting for worship, there is customarily an opportunity for those present to visit individually with the family and loved ones, and to share with each other in an informal manner. It is helpful if the meeting takes responsibility for providing refreshments, setting up, and cleaning up.

Meetings may want to find a larger location than their usual meeting place for a memorial service if their usual meeting space is small or the deceased was well known. Sometimes a meeting may need to coordinate the timing or place for the memorial meeting, especially if the individual was a public figure.

Occasionally, the family of a deceased Friend may request that there be a graveside service in addition to the memorial meeting. This service will also be held as worship in the manner of Friends, although it will normally be a much shorter and smaller gathering. Immediately before, during, and after the lowering of the body or the ashes into the grave, silence is maintained. A similar practice is followed if the ashes are scattered rather than buried.

Memorial Minute

In Illinois Yearly Meeting it is customary for the monthly meeting to prepare a memorial minute for any ILYM Friend who has died. A committee or an individual member of the monthly meeting prepares the memorial minute and shares it with the meeting. Once the meeting has approved the memorial minute, it is forwarded to the yearly meeting for inclusion in the next ILYM minute book. The meeting appoints a Friend to read the minute at the meeting for worship for memorials during the yearly meeting sessions.

Queries

For the individual

- * Do I give myself time to grieve when a loved one dies?
- * Have I discussed with my loved ones my wishes concerning serious medical crises and dying?
- * Have I prepared for my own death?
- * Am I willing to give up driving and other activities when I no longer have the ability to do them safely?
- * Have I prepared durable powers of attorney for financial and medical decisions if I cannot make them for myself?
- * Do I have a will or trust? Have I shared it with others?
- * Do I have written instructions for disposition of my body, including possible organ donation, and have I shared these instructions with those who must exercise them?

For the meeting

- * Do we discuss issues concerning the end of life?
- * Do we provide opportunities for individuals to gain clearness around issues of aging and dying?
- * Do we provide loving support and assistance for those who are aging? Do we do this in a manner that preserves their dignity?
- * Do we visit, listen to, and worship with an individual who is dying?
- * Do we offer tender concern to the family and loved ones of a person who has died or is dying?
- * Do we have emergency contact information on members and attenders?
- * If a Friend can no longer drive safely, is the meeting able to provide help with transportation?
- * Are we mindful of our limits, individually and as a meeting, in supporting a person who is seriously ill, dying, or grieving? What resources can we turn to when those limits are exceeded?
- * Does the meeting have a process that ensures spiritual and practical support for those who are ill or dying?



Life, then, is a gift of time. For each of us the days are numbered. I am grateful for each day I have to walk this beautiful earth. And I do not fear the return to the earth, for I know...that it is part of myself.

Elizabeth Watson, 1979

Sexuality and Gender Identity

The mystery of sex continues to be greater than our capacity to comprehend it... [I]ts mystery relate(s) to the mystery of God's relationship to us.

Mary S. Calderone, 1973

Quakers consider sexuality to be a gift. Like the gift of spirituality that we have also been given, it is intended to be developed and progressively understood as each of us proceeds through our life's journey. Considering one without the other may mean that we do not fully grow in our understanding of the role of either in our lives.

Friends regard personal and corporate discernment about sexual behavior, as well as discernment regarding attitudes about matters of sexuality and gender identity, to be a reflection of the testimonies (see "[Testimonies](#)"). Sexual relations, like all human relations, should be marked by honesty, integrity, personal responsibility, and mutual respect. We are called to interact lovingly with each other, recognizing that all of us are equally beloved by God. For this reason, Illinois Yearly Meeting and affiliated component meetings and worship groups seek to be welcoming and affirming for all those who attend.

Illinois Yearly Meeting is aware that there is great diversity in the relationships that people develop with one another. The worth of these relationships must not be judged on the basis of conventionality but rather to the degree that the relationship contributes to the growth of love in those affected.

Illinois Yearly Meeting, 1974

Our cultural understanding of sexuality and gender identity is evolving quickly at present, perhaps more quickly than at any previous time in recorded history. This fact is reflected in changing views on matters such as sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, and same-sex relationships, among many others. Friends' perspectives regarding these matters can be expected to continue to evolve in the foreseeable future, and related issues will continue to emerge. Individual Friends may find that their sense of their own gender identity and sexuality is fluid or has changed over time, and this may lead them to express themselves in new ways.

Friends are encouraged to be tender with each other and with themselves as we engage with matters concerning sexuality and gender identity, recognizing that changes in perspective will occur for different people at different times. Friends are called to acknowledge the importance of seeking Divine guidance in these, as in all matters. While such discernment can be difficult and complex, Friends are reminded that we are called to act always in ways that embody Love.

Queries

- ✿ Is my sexual behavior consistent with Friends' testimonies on honesty and integrity? Is it kind and compassionate? Does it reflect Friends' belief that there is that of God in everyone?
- ✿ How spiritually open is our meeting to sharing and hearing the diversity of experiences and viewpoints of its members and attenders on matters of sexuality and gender identity and expression? Is our meeting committed to a unity that is deeper than this diversity?

Addiction, Substance Abuse, and Gambling

Friends,—Whatever ye are addicted to, the tempter will come in that thing; and when he can trouble you, then he gets advantage over you, and then ye are gone.... Your strength is to stand still, after ye see yourselves; whatsoever ye see yourselves addicted to, temptations, corruption, uncleanness, &c. then ye think ye shall never overcome. And earthly reason will tell you, what ye shall lose; hearken not to that, but stand still in the light that shows them to you, and then strength comes from the Lord, and help contrary to your expectation. Then ye grow up in peace, and no trouble shall move you.

George Fox, 1652

Addiction presents one of the most difficult challenges in spiritual life. Whether to alcohol, gambling, sex (including pornography), or any of a myriad of other potentially addictive behaviors and substances, addiction always detracts from life, and in many cases is damaging in the extreme, both to the addicted individuals and to others around them. Once established, addiction usually cannot be overcome by sheer willpower. It is therefore essential to watch oneself carefully for the early signs of developing addiction, to be honest with oneself about them, and to seek help when necessary.

Meetings must bear in mind that some of their own members and attenders may be struggling with addiction. The meeting environment should be one of loving support and understanding, combined with a firm resolution to refrain from enabling the addictive behavior. Pastoral care committees should inform themselves about community resources for addressing addiction, and refer Friends when appropriate. Meeting activities should be

organized in such a way as to avoid contributing to addiction or weakening the resolve of those who are trying to resist it.

Alcohol, Tobacco, and Substance Abuse

Excessive alcohol use has been a concern of Friends since the beginnings of the Quaker movement. An early passage in George Fox's journal describes his discomfort at being asked to join drinking games as a teenager. Friends' concerns about alcohol gradually increased, and by the late nineteenth century, many meetings—including Illinois Yearly Meeting—advised total abstinence. This is no longer expected, but Friends continue to place a high value on clearness of mind. Friends are urged to be cautious in their use of alcohol, and watchful for any sign in themselves of immoderation or problematic drinking.

Friends do not generally serve alcohol at meeting events, and many meetings do not allow it on their property. This is especially important for people recovering from alcohol abuse. Meetings should be aware that people in recovery may turn to religious practice, both as a source of strength in maintaining that recovery and as a setting for social interaction and community away from alcohol.

Prescription pain medications and many other legal and illegal intoxicants present similar dangers to alcohol, and should be approached with similar watchfulness for signs of abuse.

The addictive nature of tobacco and its injurious effects on health—even at second hand—are now beyond dispute. Friends are urged to keep completely clear of all tobacco and recreational nicotine, and meetings are advised not to allow it on their property.

For those trapped in substance abuse, such advice [as to abstain from alcohol] may seem hollow. Commonalities exist between addictive behaviors with these substances and other compulsive actions such as in the areas of eating disorders,

gambling, overwork and physical abuse. The causes go deep and may not be fully understood, but the resulting pain, fear, desperation and denial, damaging the abuser and all around that person, need to be supportively recognized. A meeting community should be ready to listen non-judgmentally, offer information about sources of help, refuse to enable people to continue in harmful patterns, and continue to offer an environment free from addictive practices.

Baltimore Yearly Meeting, 1988

Gambling

Gambling can easily become addictive to certain individuals, with highly destructive effects. Friends have long opposed gambling in all its forms, not only because of its potentially addictive nature and ruinous consequences, but also because it involves a fundamental injustice. Other forms of economic activity, when properly executed, involve an equal exchange for all parties involved; but gambling always results in an imbalanced outcome: one person's gain comes at another's loss.

Friends are advised to keep clear of all gambling. This requires care and discernment, since some forms of gambling may not be easily recognized as such, and there are many unclear cases. Before making a financial investment, it is best to query oneself whether it would serve as a useful provision of capital, or mere speculation on later changes in value. Even small retail purchases sometimes come with automatic contest entries, as do charitable donations. It is best to attend carefully to any scruples one may feel regarding the use of money, especially when there appears to be a prospect of gain with nothing useful provided in exchange.

Meetings are urged not to use any form of gambling—even raffles or prize drawings—in order to raise funds.

Queries

- ✿ Do I live moderately, as prescribed by Friends' testimonies of simplicity and integrity?
- ✿ Are my recreational activities consistent with Quaker values?
- ✿ Does the meeting provide an environment free from drugs, alcohol, tobacco, and other potentially addictive substances?

Abuse and Exploitation in the Meeting Community

[Friends' testimonies](#), along with our belief that there is that of God in everyone, encourage a heightened awareness of the need for care in our relationships with one another. Still, Quakers recognize that, despite our testimonies and our highest aspirations, members and attenders of Friends meetings are not exempt from weaknesses. We are all capable of hurting each other, and we are all at risk of being hurt. Some hurtful incidents are easily rectified. Others are not.

Abuse, exploitation, harassment, bullying, and other similar types of misconduct—whether physical, verbal, sexual, or emotional—are contrary to Friends' testimonies, and in some cases, to the law. Individual Friends bear responsibility in those areas; so too do Quaker meetings. Every meeting and worship group must do whatever it can to provide a safe and loving environment for everyone, as Friends seek to affirm the worth of all children of God.

Instances of abuse and exploitation may vary enormously in severity and motivation. Insensitivity to cultural differences may play a role, as may racism and other forms of conscious or unconscious prejudice. Power imbalances, for example between children and adults, may exacerbate abuse, and make it less likely to be reported.

Each meeting is advised to make conscious and concerted efforts to prevent occurrences of abuse, exploitation, and similar forms of misconduct in any event that takes place under its auspices, and to undertake actions of both a preventive and responsive nature when it has the opportunity and/or need to do so. In addition to working diligently to assure safety in its gatherings, each meeting should be prepared to deal promptly, actively and lovingly with allegations of

misconduct. Any meeting that does not have a policy stating how such allegations are to be handled might want to consider developing and minuting one, seeking legal counsel and perhaps consulting with meetings that already have such a policy. The policy should include which officer(s) and/or committee(s) within the meeting are responsible for handling such allegations. This may vary with the type and severity of allegations, and with the degree to which privacy and confidentiality concerns play a role. When confidentiality is an issue, knowledge of the allegations must be strictly limited. Some cases are appropriately referred to the police. Some cases legally require reporting to other government authorities. The policy should contain guidance in these matters.

Regardless of whether misconduct of any sort is found to have taken place, those involved are likely to feel out of right relationship with the meeting, especially if they believe it is not safe to address these matters. Those with knowledge of the situation should work to restore a sense of safety and security, and to heal the damage to the meeting community. Considerations of privacy and confidentiality must be respected in this process: even if the meeting as a whole has been hurt, this does not mean the meeting as a whole has a right to know everything that has happened. Still, every member and attendee is always responsible for nurturing a trustworthy and beloved community.

Queries

- ✿ How can our meeting assure that its practices and events are free of exploitation and harassment?
- ✿ Does our meeting promote an environment in which those who may be experiencing abuse or exploitation feel that they can turn to the meeting for help?

- ✿ Does our meeting respond to allegations of misconduct conscientiously and with care for everyone involved?
- ✿ If abuse occurs or has already occurred in our meeting, how can we reach out to both abuser and abused? How can we foster the process of healing for those involved and for the meeting as a whole?
- ✿ How can our meeting offer protection and support to those who have been adversely affected by abuse and other forms of misconduct? Has our meeting prepared itself with appropriate contact information in order to make referrals to professional resources if that becomes necessary?

Friends and the State

While we recognize the need of law and order, which in the present condition of mankind can perhaps only be maintained by governments resting on human authority, we believe that in the degree that we come individually under the government of that principle of justice and unselfish regard for the welfare of others, that lies at the foundation of the Christian faith, we shall render governments sustained by force, unnecessary, and build up through self restraint, the government of Righteousness in the earth.

Illinois Yearly Meeting, 1878

Friends' relation with civil government proceeds both from our recognition that government plays a useful and beneficial role in promoting the common good, upholding justice, and providing a system for collective decision-making; and from our awareness that government sometimes depends on violence or threats of violence to achieve its goals, and may be diverted from the pursuit of justice into the service of powerful interests. It is our responsibility to participate in the civic life of our communities, states, nations and world. But it is also our responsibility firmly to oppose governmental structures, actions and policies which promote war or injustice of any kind.

[R]esistance in nonviolent form breaks through the paralyzing peace which is peace for the master and misery for the mastered. Paradoxically, as it breaks the unjust social peace, its weapon of goodwill and love builds the sacred base of real brotherhood, in which the dignity and equal opportunity of every person is sacred and guaranteed.

Bayard Rustin, 1960

Civic Responsibility and the Political Process

True Godliness don't turn men out of the World, but enables them to live better in it and excites their Endeavors to mend it.

William Penn, 1682

Remember your responsibility as citizens for the government of your town and country, and do not shirk the effort and time this may demand. Do not be content to accept things as they are, but keep an alert and questioning mind. Seek to discover the causes of social unrest, injustice and fear; try to discern the new growing-points in social and economic life. Work for an order of society which will allow men and women to develop their capacities and will foster their desire to serve.

London Yearly Meeting, 1964

Love of God and humankind calls us to labor for a just, equitable and peaceful society. Friends are urged to participate fully in public life, working to build and maintain civic institutions which strengthen communities, promote health and safety, and protect the rights and freedoms of all people. Friends should stand willing to serve their communities as needed, in elected or appointed office, through volunteer work, organizing, or in other ways. Friends are urged to communicate their views on public policy to those in positions of authority, promoting policies and decisions which build peace and justice.

Engagement in the political process is a necessary and useful part of efforts to improve the world, but it also requires a good deal of care. Decisions in the public sphere, as in a Friends meeting, are most effective when those affected by them are deeply convinced of their rightness. A contentious, partisan spirit is rarely helpful in producing

such convincement. Friends engaged in political activity must guard diligently against letting triumph over political adversaries become a goal, rather than reaching a real collective understanding of how an issue is to be resolved.

...and we are not for Names, nor for Men, nor for Titles of Government, nor are we for this party, nor against the other, because of its name and pretense; but we are for Justice, and Mercy, and Truth, and Peace, and true freedom, that these may be exalted in our Nation; and that goodness, righteousness, meekness, temperance, peace, and unity, with God, and one with another; that these things may abound, and be brought forth abundantly...

Edward Burrough, 1659

Friends' religious values provide ample motivation for advancing peace, justice, compassion and equality in public life and government policy. But the promotion of such values must be clearly distinguished from the promotion of religion itself. Friends are firmly committed to the separation of church and state, and do not countenance any role for government in supporting religion, or any role for religious institutions in the operation of government.

Meetings are cautioned that their legal status as tax-exempt churches may be threatened if they campaign for particular political candidates, or engage in substantial lobbying.

Police, Judicial, and Penal Institutions

Over more than three and a half centuries, Quakers have often faced imprisonment or other legal penalties for the sake of religious conscience. Based in part on this experience, Friends have been concerned to improve the institutions by which society deals with criminal and civil wrongdoing of all kinds. We work for the creation

of a justice system which treats all people fairly, recognizes the value of every human life, and promotes honesty, compassion, and regard for others as central principles by which society is ordered.

True justice consists not in the punishment of wrongdoers, but in kind and equitable treatment of all people. Once wrongdoing has occurred, the possibility of complete justice is lost. The first priority in building justice, therefore, is to foster the values of kindness, fairness, charity, and respect—in ourselves, in others, and in the general organization of society. To the extent that people order their lives around these values, and perceive themselves to be treated by others in accordance with them, the need for a system of responding to crimes and other wrongs is diminished.

The present reality of injustice requires some means of investigating crime and bringing those who commit it to account. Friends therefore recognize the legitimate police powers of the state. However, we stand in opposition to the militarization of police equipment and tactics. We recognize too the problems caused by real or perceived bias in police conduct, and support efforts to reduce it, and to hold officers accountable when bias occurs.

When crimes are committed, Friends generally favor responses which focus to the extent possible on repairing the damage caused by the crime, involving all the affected parties in the resolution, and creating the conditions under which both those who have been affected by crimes and those who have committed them can resume safe and responsible roles in society.

In some cases, people who have committed crimes may have proven so dangerous that it is necessary to separate them from the rest of society, at least for a time. Such separation must not be imposed as a form of vengeance or retribution, but conducted in a way which recognizes and respects the humanity of prisoners. Prisoners, no less than other people, have a moral right to good quality healthcare, human interaction, and the opportunity to maintain family relations. The families of prisoners must not be excessively burdened by obstacles to communicating with their loved ones in prison, such as

unreasonable fees. Every effort must be made to provide prisoners with the skills, habits, and attitudes which will allow for a safe and successful reintegration on release. It is the responsibility of society as a whole to provide opportunities for people released from prison to build honest and productive lives; the lack of such opportunities all too often encourages ex-prisoners to resume criminal activity.

While we recognize a need to restrain those whose dangerous behavior is a threat, that restraint and any help offered must reflect our concern for that of God in everyone. The prejudice, dishonesty, and racism prevalent in society frequently lead to unfair and unjust sentences and to brutality in the handling of prisoners. Improvement in the parole system and the reduction of pretrial time are greatly needed.

New York Yearly Meeting, 1995

Capital punishment

Friends have long felt a special concern to end the use of capital punishment as a penalty for crime. It is our faith that something of God is present in all people, even those who have committed the most heinous acts. A proper regard for the sanctity of human life weighs heavily against the idea of destroying life, even when intended as an act of justice. No person is beyond God's power of redemption, but to cut short an offender's life is to give up hope for their eventual reclamation. Execution of offenders by the state also tends to create in people's minds the impression that killing is a legitimate response to perceived offenses. It has a degrading and brutalizing effect on society, and offers no better safety than alternatives.

No man is ever utterly lost, and however deep he is sunk in evil, the only just approach to him is to work for his recovery. This principle led John Bellers, the earliest Friend to pay serious and systematic attention to social reform, to plead for the abolition of the death penalty.... Society had done enough for its own

protection, he argued, when it had rendered a murderer harmless by putting him in prison; if it did more it was acting in a spirit of revenge.

Harold Loukes, 1960

Oaths

In certain legal contexts, such as when testifying in court, Friends may find that they are asked to swear oaths. Since the very earliest days of the Quaker movement, Friends have resisted this expectation, taking seriously Jesus' injunction "Do not swear at all... Let what you say be simply 'Yes' or 'No'; anything more than this comes from evil" (Matthew 5:37). Swearing an oath sets up a double standard, implying that a lie is more acceptable if not made under oath. In place of swearing, Friends generally give a simple affirmation that what they say is true. Statements made after such an affirmation are subject to perjury laws, just as are sworn statements.

The distinction between swearing and affirming may seem minor to some people, but the legal right to affirm rather than swear was hard-won, and many of our predecessors suffered greatly to establish it. Friends are urged not to abandon it lightly.

Conscientious Objection and Civil Disobedience

Friends have long held that participation in war is incompatible with a life of compassion and love for one's enemies as taught by Jesus. We stand in support of those who refuse for reasons of conscience to be conscripted into military service, or to register for such conscription. We likewise support those who withhold a portion of their taxes, up to the amount which would otherwise go to military spending, provided the withheld amount is set aside for charitable donation if not seized by the government.

More generally, we hold that no government or other human authority may compel people to act contrary to their conscience. When one's deeply and sincerely held moral convictions are incompatible with the demands of the state, it is one's right and responsibility to refrain from complying with those demands.

The witness of those who conscientiously disobey a law is badly undermined if they—or those with whom they are associated—are perceived as having little regard for law even apart from issues of conscience. For this reason, all Friends are strongly urged to adhere strictly to the law in all cases where conscience permits.

When one's conscience is in tension with the expectations of the state or other authorities, difficult decisions must be faced.

Noncompliance without sacrifice may not be possible and should not be expected. Those who violate the law for the sake of conscience must be prepared to receive punishment as the law provides.

Employees who find that they cannot conscientiously perform essential parts of their jobs must be prepared to lose them. In many cases it may make more sense to resign, than to insist on remaining in a job while refusing to perform it.

Friends feeling led to violate the law for reasons of conscience, or to pursue any course of action which may result in adversity for themselves or others, are urged to seek a clearness process from their meetings. Young Friends who believe that they may eventually seek legal status as conscientious objectors are advised to document their anti-war beliefs and activities, starting as early as possible. In some cases it may be appropriate to seek a minute from one's monthly meeting in support of action pursued as a form of religious witness. (See "[Recognizing Spiritual Gifts and Leadings](#).") Meetings should stand ready to provide spiritual and practical support to Friends and others who may be suffering for their convictions.

Meetings have a role not only in supporting individuals who are facing such issues, but also in taking action as a meeting. The corporate action of a meeting may provide a powerful witness to the injustice of a law. Modern examples include Friends meetings which

have sheltered refugees who were in the United States without proper documentation, and meetings which held same-sex marriages under their care before such marriages were legal. Meetings must approach such actions very seriously, and only with deep, prayerful discernment, and clear-eyed attention to possible consequences. But if, after such careful discernment, a meeting is united in its perception of what God requires it to do, it must proceed as led.

Civil disobedience means open, considerate, nonviolent defiance of some law which is against the conscience of those who disobey it, and is resorted to after all means of altering it have been exhausted. Since the purpose of civil disobedience is to compel others to re-examine the conscientious basis of the law, the proposed disobedience and the reasons for it are widely announced in advance. The law enforcement authorities are given every opportunity to prevent the proposed action and to punish the participants. The necessary role of the authorities in enforcing the law is recognized and they are treated courteously, but opposition to the law is unyielding and its opponents willingly accept prison sentences and sacrifice all rather than comply. This builds a moral force which no law can withstand if the cause is just and the disobedience is sufficiently widespread and prolonged.

Lawrence S. Apsey, 1960

Weapons

Friends have a special concern to build a more peaceful society. We therefore work for a careful reduction in the proliferation of weapons, not only among nations supplying their military forces, but also among private individuals arming themselves for personal defense.

The desire for effective means of self-defense is natural and understandable, and we do not condemn those who feel unready to suffer injury or death rather than defend themselves. But relying on the threat of violence as a deterrent to attack does not usually

advance the goal of a society organized on the basis of loving compassion, justice, and forgiveness. The outward appearance of peace can perhaps be maintained through such threats; but this is a false peace, which provides fertile ground for the seeds of later conflict. When it is the norm to keep tools for killing people close at hand, the risk to people's lives is increased, not decreased.

As a body, Friends have held since the seventeenth century that the Divine Spirit "will never move us to fight and war against any man with outward weapons." Individual Friends who have weapons for defense against other people are tenderly advised to consider whether the time has come to give them up. Friends who have guns for hunting or sporting purposes are urged to secure them carefully to prevent accidents, theft, and easy misuse in moments of lost temper or suicidal despair.

Meetings are strongly advised not to allow firearms or other weapons at their gatherings or on their property. Friends and meetings are encouraged to work toward the general reduction of personal armament in wider society, and to support measures which impose reasonable regulations on firearms trade and possession.

Queries

- ✿ Do I fulfill my civic responsibilities when they do not conflict with Divine leadings?
- ✿ How does the meeting serve the local community in ways that foster the common good?
- ✿ What does the meeting do to promote peace and help eradicate injustice, both locally and in the world at large?



Vital religious experience can provide the power to overcome the world. Gandhi and followers experienced this, as did the early Christian church and early Quakers. Corporate worship deepens the commitment of the believers and can help them to stand firm against tyranny and oppression when they are laboring to bring about needed social reforms. For the early Quakers, such activity was the extension of worship beyond the gathered community into a world divided by hatred, fear, and exploitation.

Barrington Dunbar, 1968

Organization and Structure of Meetings

Communities of Friends

The Quaker way of life is one of community: Friends gather together for worship, for service, to support each other spiritually and in other ways, and to reach collective decisions on the issues which arise in community life. For Friends, religion is not just a matter of individual experience, but something we enter into together, acting as a body in our worship, our witness, and our business; holding each other in mutual care, love, and attention.

This is not to discount the experience of those Friends who live at too great a distance from their meetings to participate regularly, nor to deny that each of us must come individually to a sense of what is right and true and essential in spiritual matters. But time and experience have proven the value of a close, responsive community in fostering individual spiritual growth, in testing and tempering individual leadings and individual understanding, and in supporting individuals as they are called to act or to suffer for religious principle. Worship in a gathered community is different in valuable ways from private devotion, and a coordinated group can accomplish far more in service and advocacy than individuals acting alone.

Effective functioning as a community requires some organizational structure, and Friends have developed a variety of modes of organization at both the local and the regional levels.

The local (or “particular”) meeting may be organized as a *worship group*, *preparative meeting*, or *monthly meeting*. (The differences among these are explained in the [Difference Among Different Types of Local Meetings table](#).) Whatever its organizational pattern, the

local meeting is where Friends typically find their primary spiritual home. The local meeting is where Friends gather most often for worship, where they have the most regular contact with one another, and where they can most easily provide individual care and support for one another. Indeed, some Friends find that their entire involvement in the Religious Society of Friends is with their local meeting.

There is a strong tradition of local autonomy in Illinois Yearly Meeting, and local meetings order their own affairs as they feel led. But Friends' community is not purely local, any more than spiritual life is purely individual. No local meeting is a denomination unto itself; we are gathered into larger, regional bodies and into the worldwide Religious Society of Friends just as we are gathered locally: for worship, mutual care, fellowship, and above all for service to God and to humankind. Larger gatherings provide support for local meetings and make coordination possible across meetings; they allow the pursuit of larger-scale projects than local meetings could accomplish on their own; they broaden the spiritual perspectives both of meetings and of individuals; and they provide an important unifying influence among Friends.

Regional meetings may be organized in various ways and for regions of various sizes. In some cases a monthly meeting may function as a small regional body, with [more than one local meeting in its care](#). Several monthly meetings may be organized into a quarterly meeting, or may hold other kinds of regional gatherings. Yearly meetings encompass a still wider area; Illinois Yearly Meeting includes local meetings throughout Illinois and neighboring areas of several other states. Various "umbrella" organizations promote communication, services, and cooperation among yearly meetings, and represent the Religious Society of Friends at the national and international levels.

The purpose and organization of these various kinds of local meetings, regional meetings, and other organizations will be described in turn.

Monthly Meetings

The monthly meeting is our primary level of business meeting, conducting the business of a single local meeting, or in some cases of a small number of meetings across a limited region. By tradition, such business meetings are held monthly. By extension, the body of Friends whose business is conducted in such a meeting is also known as a monthly meeting. Membership in the Religious Society of Friends is through and in a monthly meeting, which may admit new members and make other [membership decisions](#).

Functions of monthly meetings

Communal worship is at the center of Quaker religious practice. Therefore, each monthly meeting organizes, maintains, and oversees one or more regular meetings for worship. This includes arranging the time and location of meetings, publicizing their existence, and seeing that those who attend meeting are warmly welcomed. Beyond these practical matters, the monthly meeting promotes the spiritual vitality of its meetings for worship, encouraging worship and ministry in which the presence of God is deeply felt, and the spiritual needs of meeting participants, individually and as a community, are tenderly addressed. (See “[Meeting for Worship](#).”)

The monthly meeting also nurtures the meeting community and cares for its members outside of meeting for worship. Often, the meeting has meals together after worship, or holds other events which cultivate a sense of intimacy and fellowship among meeting participants. It educates both children and adults in the principles of Friends, and supports them in their spiritual development. It is responsible for holding meetings for marriage, funerals, and memorials. The meeting should see to it that Friends in difficult or trying circumstances receive the support they need, whether in the

form of practical assistance, counsel, or simple companionship and acknowledgment.

Monthly meetings also witness publicly as led by God and interpret the Quaker message to the wider community. Much of this witness may take the form of advocacy for peace, justice, environmental stewardship, and equality; or of direct service and relief to those in need.

All of these functions require resources and organization, and the monthly meeting therefore also serves an administrative purpose. It receives, maintains, and disburses funds. It may own and maintain a meetinghouse, burial ground, or other property. It must keep accurate records of its business proceedings, membership, and finances.

Positions and committees of the monthly meeting

In fulfilling their functions, meetings usually find that certain responsibilities are best delegated to particular individuals or groups. The extent of this delegation will vary with the size, activity, and needs of the meeting. Normally, all monthly meetings will appoint someone to the position of *clerk*, and a different person as *treasurer*. A very small meeting might make no other appointments than these, working together as a committee of the whole in cases where other meetings might delegate, or might appoint individuals to handle responsibilities which in a larger meeting might be the work of committees. A very large meeting may have an elaborate system of committees and individual positions, into whose care the practical work of the meeting has been placed, and in which business is prepared before presentation to the monthly meeting itself.

The kinds of committees and individual positions which a meeting sets up are a matter for careful discernment. Just as organizational structure varies from meeting to meeting, it may vary across time within a single meeting. The size, energy, and concerns of a meeting community may change over the course of its history, and Friends

sometimes find that a pattern of organization which formerly served them well has become an impediment to effective work. Meetings do well to reconsider their structure from time to time. When major changes are made, community members may need to alter their habits and expectations. A meeting which has recently established a system of committees must guard against redoing committee work in its monthly meeting for business. A meeting which has recently laid down major committees must find new ways of making sure that vital work gets done.

Not all meetings will always use all the committees and positions listed here. But they have all proven to be useful in the right circumstances, and some of them have deep roots in Quaker tradition.

Clerk. The position of clerk is motivated by two unusual features of Friends' business process: We do not vote, and decisions may be made which do not reflect proposals whose wording is prepared in advance of the meeting. These features present a challenge: How can we be sure when a decision has actually been made, and precisely what has been decided? To prevent confusion over such questions, meetings appoint a clerk, whose charge is to discern when the meeting has reached a decision in its business sessions and to articulate this decision back to the meeting for its approval.

In principle, our meetings are presided over by the Divine Spirit, by which we wait to be guided in our business meetings no less than in our meetings for worship. The clerk is not so much the pilot on whom Friends rely to steer the ship, as the mirror into which they look to see what decisions they have reached; accurately reflecting the sense of the meeting is the first responsibility of good clerking.

The position of clerk in a Friends meeting differs in important ways from that of president in some other organizations. In many institutions, the president has extensive executive decision-making power, and is expected to take the lead in developing new initiatives and new programs. In contrast, the position of clerk is first and foremost one of discernment in business meeting, and requires a

degree of impartiality which is easily undermined, in appearance or reality, if the clerk makes major meeting decisions or strenuously promotes specific choices on the issues which come before the meeting. Of course the clerk may make such administrative decisions as are necessary to carry out the will of the meeting, but the primary role of the clerk is discerning the sense of the meeting as guided by the Spirit.

The clerk prepares a tentative agenda before the meeting, recognizes speakers during the meeting, and is responsible for seeing that the decisions of the meeting are carried out afterwards. The clerk signs letters and other documents on behalf of the meeting as it directs. In many meetings the clerk is assigned additional responsibilities outside the meeting for business, such as dealing with incoming correspondence, communicating with and assisting meeting committees, or closing the meeting for worship and making announcements. In meetings which do not appoint a separate recorder or recording clerk, these functions also fall to the clerk.

Some meetings also appoint an *assistant clerk*, who aids the clerk in formulating a clear and accurate expression of meeting decisions, substitutes for the clerk when the clerk is absent, and assists in other ways as the meeting directs. In some meetings the assistant clerkship serves as training for future service as clerk.

For more on the functions of the clerk, see [“The roles of the clerk and recording clerk in meeting for business.”](#)

Recording clerk. Originally, it was the responsibility of the clerk to record the minutes of the monthly meeting, and especially in smaller meetings this may still be the case. However, most meetings have found it useful to appoint a separate recording clerk, so that the clerk may devote full attention to discerning the sense of the meeting on the questions which come before it.

The recording clerk is responsible for writing out the minutes as they are approved, and in most meetings shares responsibility with the clerk for composing the actual wording of the minutes. After the

meeting, the recording clerk prepares an official copy of the minutes to be stored in a permanent file or minute book, and typically also prepares copies for distribution to meeting participants. (See “[The roles of the clerk and recording clerk in meeting for business.](#)”)

Treasurer. The treasurer receives, invests, and disburses the funds of the meeting in accordance with its instructions, and regularly reports to the meeting on its receipts, expenditures, balance, and general financial state. Individual donors are not identified in such reports, and the treasurer should treat their identities as confidential. The treasurer provides donors with receipts for their donations as required for tax purposes. In meetings without a separate financial committee, the treasurer also typically prepares a draft budget for consideration by the monthly meeting.

Recorder. The recorder (not to be confused with the recording clerk) is responsible for maintaining the membership records of the meeting. These include an up-to-date list of members; their names and addresses; the dates when membership was initiated; and whether it was initiated by birth/adoption, transfer from another meeting, or request. Records should be maintained for former members, giving the date when membership was terminated and whether it was terminated by death, transfer to another meeting, or release from membership. Many meetings keep additional information provided by members: dates and locations of births, marriages and deaths; names of parents, spouses, and children; and other information which the meeting may find useful and which members are willing to share. The recorder should keep a record of marriages held under the care of the meeting, including dates and a copy or transcript of the marriage certificate.

It is strongly advised that all records be kept in hard copy on acid-free paper. A computer database of members may also be useful, but does not eliminate the need for hard-copy records because computer media and file formats become obsolete.

The recorder should bear in mind that the approval of the monthly business meeting is required for all membership transfers, all

initiations of membership by request, and all releases from membership, including releases of Friends who have been inactive for many years and with whom the meeting has lost touch. It is not the prerogative of the recorder to purge the membership book of inactive Friends or to decide who should no longer be considered a member.

The recorder should provide the [care and counsel committee](#) or its equivalent with an up-to-date membership list at least annually.

In most meetings, the recorder or another Friend also periodically publishes a meeting directory, giving such contact information as active members and attenders of the meeting are willing to share. This directory should not be confused with the formal membership list of the meeting.

A sample membership record is given in [Appendix 1](#).

Archivist. Many meetings appoint an archivist, who is responsible for maintaining the meeting's records, including a complete set of minutes, older membership records and financial documents, deeds and other property-related documents, newsletters, and other materials felt to be of permanent interest. It is useful to keep copies of such documents on hand for meeting use, but it is strongly recommended that the original copies of legal documents be kept in a safe-deposit box, and that the original copies of most other kinds of materials be deposited on loan in an external, publicly accessible repository. The archivist is responsible for seeing that materials are deposited in a timely manner. Many meetings in Illinois Yearly Meeting archive their records at the Illinois History and Lincoln Collections, a department of the University of Illinois Library in Urbana-Champaign.

Librarian or library committee. Many meetings appoint an individual or committee to oversee the meeting library. It is helpful for the library to include material for new and experienced Friends, for children and adults, and to include both permanent holdings and materials to be given out to newcomers.

Religious education committee. This committee coordinates the meeting's efforts to educate the meeting's children in the principles and values of Friends. It is sometimes known as the First Day School Committee or by other names. Because meetings can grow and thrive if they are welcoming to families and children, this may be the first committee formed in a small meeting. This committee may also coordinate religious education for adults, but more commonly this is handled by a separate committee or a self-organizing study group.

The committee is responsible for finding appropriate teachers, and for supporting and overseeing their work. If teachers are chosen from among the members and attenders of the meeting, care should be taken not to leave the job of teaching exclusively to parents. In any case, teachers should be well known to the meeting, or carefully interviewed and investigated to ensure the safety of the children and the appropriateness of the teachers' instructional style.

The committee bears responsibility for the curriculum, subject to the guidance and approval of the monthly meeting. Some useful resources are available from Illinois Yearly Meeting and from Friends General Conference. The practical work of developing the curriculum and assembling instructional materials may be performed by the committee, the teachers, or both in consultation. Whatever the arrangement, parents should be consulted. For more information, see "[Religious Education](#)."

Care and counsel committee. This committee coordinates the meeting's care of its members and other active participants in the meeting community, working to make sure that they are adequately supported in times of trial or decision, and addressing cases of conflict or disaffection in the meeting. In many meetings it is also given specific responsibilities in the meeting's handling of membership, marriages, and funerals and memorial meetings. Such a committee is recommended even for relatively small meetings.

The committee continues, in some sense, the responsibilities formerly assigned to meeting "overseers," and may be known in

some meetings as the Oversight Committee, the Pastoral Care Committee, or by other names. Continued use of the term *overseers* is not recommended, because of the potential for offensive connotations from historical uses of this term associated with slavery. Frequently, this committee is combined with the worship and ministry committee to form a single committee known as Ministry and Counsel, or something similar.

The care and counsel committee should make regular contact with all members of the meeting, whether local or distant, and inquire after their spiritual and practical needs, and their relation with the meeting. It should keep alert to new situations as they arise, offering its help to meeting participants experiencing difficulties, and inquiring after those who have recently dropped their involvement in the meeting. When cases of conflict arise in the meeting, it works toward reconciliation. When appropriate, the committee may refer individuals to organizations in the wider community which provide practical or material assistance, counseling, or other services; it is strongly urged that the committee keep itself informed about the availability of such services, and keep an up-to-date directory with contact information. Strict confidentiality must be maintained both in the committee's own contacts and in its referrals to outside organizations. For more on care for the meeting community, see "[Pastoral Care](#)."

In many meetings, requests for membership or marriage under the care of the meeting are referred to this committee, as are requests for a funeral or memorial meeting. (See "[Applying for Membership](#)," "[Marriage Procedure](#)," and "[Memorial Meetings](#).")

Proposals to drop a Friend from membership, or to alter the membership policy of the meeting, are also normally considered in this committee before presentation to the monthly meeting.

Worship and ministry committee. This committee fosters the spiritual life of the meeting, especially the meeting for worship, promoting its vitality, depth, and fidelity to the life of the Spirit. This function is a continuation, to some extent, of responsibilities which

in an earlier era belonged to the “preparative meeting of ministers and elders,” and the committee may still in some meetings be known as the Elders Committee, or by other names. In many meetings, it is combined with the care and counsel committee to form a single committee known as Ministry and Counsel, or something similar.

The worship and ministry committee may include Friends of any age or experience with a concern for the spiritual life of the community and its meetings for worship; but ideally it will include several experienced and knowledgeable Friends, some Friends who speak frequently in meeting, and some Friends who speak less frequently.

The committee meets regularly to consider the spiritual state of the meeting, and the quality and conduct of its meetings for worship, including those for business. The [queries in the State of Society Report section](#) may help guide the committee in its consideration of these matters.

Members of the worship and ministry committee pay special attention to those Friends who have recently begun to speak more frequently in meeting, offering them counsel and guidance, and encouraging whatever in their ministry appears a free and faithful expression of the Light Within. In many meetings, this committee also provides support and advice to the clerk.

The worship and ministry committee is also responsible for dealing with disruptions in meeting for worship, and with participants who make a habit of inappropriate ministry. A light touch is strongly urged in approaching such cases. It should be carefully considered whether the meeting might be damaged more by the bitterness and ill feeling which may result if a participant feels silenced than it would by forbearance. Nor should ministry be considered inappropriate simply because it is disturbing or upsetting to the meeting. But when inappropriate speech or other behavior interferes with the meeting’s ability to hold meaningful meetings for worship, it is appropriate to take steps to correct the situation. On rare occasions, members of the committee must act individually to deal with disruptions as they arise; but it is strongly recommended that

responses be developed by the committee as a whole whenever possible.

The worship and ministry committee may also work to promote the spiritual life of the meeting outside its regular meeting for worship, for example by arranging for retreats, workshops, or other events; by formulating queries for the meeting's consideration; or by making spiritually beneficial literature or other materials available to the meeting.

Nominating committee. This committee proposes Friends to fill the positions and committees of the meeting, checking to make sure they are willing and available for service and aware of the terms and responsibilities before submitting their names to the monthly meeting for final approval.

Selecting Friends for service is a matter for careful discernment. While it is useful to ask meeting members and attenders which positions they feel most drawn to, care should be taken to consider who is best suited to a position, and not to base decisions on the mere fact that someone has volunteered. Young people and those new to the meeting should be considered, not only "old hands." The committee is cautioned against rotating Friends through important positions of the meeting out of a sense that everyone deserves a "turn." At the same time, it should recognize opportunities for nurturing the growth of individuals in their ability to serve the meeting through participation in committee work. In many meetings certain positions, such as clerk, treasurer, and members of the worship and ministry committee and the care and counsel committee are limited to members of the Religious Society of Friends.

The nominating committee normally does not name its own members. This may be done by an ad hoc naming committee or through some other process developed by the monthly meeting. Members of the nominating committee should be knowledgeable about the responsibilities of the positions and committees of the meeting, and familiar with a wide range of participants in the meeting community.

Finance committee. This committee exercises a special care over the financial state of the meeting, working with the treasurer to ensure that the meeting remains in good financial condition and to clearly explain meeting finances. The finance committee proposes the meeting's annual budget, which must then be approved by the monthly meeting before adoption. The finance committee addresses any applicable tax considerations. In some meetings, the committee also considers requests for unbudgeted expenses. It is recommended that the committee review the treasurer's books at least annually. The finance committee may also issue fundraising appeals, or this may be handled by a separate fundraising committee.

Peace and social concerns committee. This committee, which may also be known as the Peace and Service Committee or by other names, coordinates the meeting's witness to the wider society by promoting the peaceful resolution of conflicts; fostering justice, compassion, and care of the environment; and providing service or relief to those in need. This witness may include petitioning the state; organizing events to educate and inform the public or the meeting on relevant issues; direct provision of food, shelter, or other necessities; or other work as the committee feels led and circumstances suggest.

Advancement and outreach committee. This committee (or, in some meetings, an advancement committee and a separate outreach committee) serves to advance the life of the meeting and the principles of Friends. It works to build the meeting community, both by fostering a sense of connection among meeting participants and by promoting awareness of the meeting and of Friends in general among the wider public. The committee may arrange workshops, retreats, lectures, and social events, promoting these inside and outside the meeting as appropriate. Most meetings prefer a low-key approach to outreach, believing that the example of meeting service to the community will be more convincing to seekers than direct proselytization. But it is doubtful whether the Quaker movement would have survived if it had not been energetically promoted by early Friends; and even the example of community service will not be

convincing to seekers who have no opportunity to hear of it. At the very least, the meeting must make sure it can be easily found by those who may already be looking for a Friends meeting.

Property committee. This committee, which may also be known as the House and Grounds Committee, Maintenance and Planning Committee or by other names, coordinates the maintenance of the meetinghouse and land, if any. In many meetings it also develops plans for future construction. If the meetinghouse is made available to outside groups, or if part of it is rented as an apartment, guesthouse, or for other purposes, this committee may also serve as the meeting contact with the guests or tenants, and administer any rental agreements; or this may be handled by a separate meetinghouse use committee or rental committee.

Trustees and incorporation officers. Meetings which are organized as legal trusts or corporations may also have officers as required by state law, articles of incorporation, or corporation bylaws. Care should be taken to make full use of regular Quaker structure and decision making in fulfilling these roles. Monthly meetings are not covered by the yearly meeting incorporation.

Other positions and committees. A monthly meeting may establish such other positions and committees as seem useful and appropriate.

Responsibilities of monthly meetings to other meetings

Every monthly meeting is responsible to conduct its affairs in the manner of Friends, seek the Spirit's guidance in its worship and business, uphold Friends' testimonies, and exercise loving care for its members. Beyond this, monthly meetings fulfill a particular role in the organizational structure of the Religious Society of Friends, and therefore bear specific responsibilities both to the larger meetings of which they form a part, such as the yearly and quarterly meetings, and to any smaller meetings under their care.

Responsibilities to the yearly meeting and to the quarterly meeting. Monthly meetings in Illinois Yearly Meeting have a responsibility to participate in the life and work of the yearly meeting. To the extent possible, Friends from each monthly meeting are encouraged to attend the yearly meeting's business sessions, and serve as called on yearly meeting committees. Each monthly meeting appoints a representative to the yearly meeting, whose responsibilities include attending the Continuing Committee and yearly meeting sessions. The representative brings concerns, reports and other business from the yearly meeting to the monthly meeting and responds, as directed by the monthly meeting, to requests from the yearly meeting. Representatives may also bring concerns or other business from their monthly meeting to the Continuing Committee or yearly meeting session. (See "[Bringing Business to the Yearly Meeting.](#)")

Monthly meetings are expected to help in the planning of yearly meeting sessions and in the practical work of putting on these gatherings. Monthly meetings may be expected from time to time to host meetings of the Continuing Committee. (See "[Continuing the work of the yearly meeting between sessions—Continuing Committee.](#)")

Monthly meetings have a responsibility to contribute to the financial support of the yearly meeting. The amount to be contributed is determined by the monthly meeting; however, Illinois Yearly Meeting recommends specific minimum amounts, proportional to the number of "resident adult members" in the monthly meeting. "Resident" members are those who live close enough to the meeting to attend on a regular basis; the monthly meeting must judge how close this is.

Each monthly meeting sends two annual reports to the yearly meeting. The first is a statistical report, giving information such as a list of those individuals who have initiated, terminated, or transferred membership during the preceding year; the total number of members, divided into adult members and Young Friends,

resident and non-resident; average attendance during the year; names of the meeting clerk, treasurer, recorder, and representative to the yearly meeting; and other information as the yearly meeting requests. The second report is a “State of Society Report,” describing the spiritual state of the meeting. This may be similar or identical to the State of Society Report read at the quarterly meeting; for more information on this report, see the next section.

A monthly meeting which forms part of a quarterly meeting bears similar responsibilities to the quarterly as it does to the yearly meeting. Friends from each monthly meeting in the quarterly are encouraged to attend its business sessions, and serve as called on its committees. Monthly meetings plan and host the quarterly gatherings. Monthly meetings also have a responsibility to support the quarterly, according to practices established by the quarterly, and to send a State of Society Report and such other reports as the quarterly meeting requests.

State of Society Reports. At least annually, each monthly meeting prepares a report on the spiritual state of the meeting community. In essence, this is to answer the question “How is the life of the Spirit faring in your meeting?” If the meeting is part of a quarterly meeting this report is read there, with an opportunity for the gathered Friends to respond to it in a worshipful manner. In addition, the report is sent to the yearly meeting for publication in the annual minute book.

Historically, quarterly and yearly meetings expected each constituent monthly meeting to report by minuting responses to a series of queries about its spiritual and practical condition. The traditional queries covered a variety of areas, including factual information about the regularity with which meetings were held; the establishment or discontinuance of meetings; the lives and conduct of meeting members and the degree to which they upheld Friends’ testimonies; and the meeting’s conformity to accepted Friends’ practice in its meetings for business and worship. Over time, the queries came to be regarded not as definite questions to which

answers were expected, but as guides to the kinds of topics to be discussed in a free-form report.

The following queries are offered for those meetings which may wish to return to the practice of composing reports in whole or in part as a series of query responses, or as a guide to the kinds of topics to be discussed in a free-form report, as the meeting feels led. If a free-form report is given, it is usually formulated by a committee or individual appointed by the meeting, with the final text being approved by the monthly meeting as a whole. If the report is given as a series of query responses, it is recommended that these not be formulated by a committee, but that the entire meeting be given an opportunity to respond to each query out of the silence, with the clerk discerning the sense of the meeting from the responses and distilling it into a minute. (The fifth, eleventh, and twelfth of the following queries are adapted from queries in the 1879 and 1892 disciplines of Illinois Yearly Meeting.)

- ✿ What is the quality of worship in recent meetings? Do Friends feel drawn into living silence? Do we meet in the hope and expectation of a transformative encounter with the Divine Spirit?
- ✿ Does the meeting feel “gathered” in its worship, seeking and responding to God as a community? Are meetings more than simultaneous individual meditation?
- ✿ Is the right balance between silence and speaking maintained? Do Friends speak when moved to do so? When spoken ministry is offered, is it under a clear sense of Divine leading?
- ✿ Do Friends feel the opportunity to grow spiritually? Does the meeting community provide both the challenge and the sense of security needed for real spiritual progress? How does our meeting develop and nurture ministry and service?
- ✿ Do Friends maintain love and fellowship towards one another and care for each other in times of need? Are conflicts handled in a timely and respectful manner?

- ✿ How are we teaching our children? How are we teaching adults? How are we encouraging Friends, including teenagers, to participate in our programs?
- ✿ How is our membership changing? Why has it changed? How do we help make the transitions from visitor to attender and from attender to member?
- ✿ How visible is our meeting to the public? How welcoming is it? How do we reach out to invite newcomers?
- ✿ How does our meeting connect with the wider Quaker world? Do we make use of the resources of Friends from outside the meeting? Do we encourage participation in quarterly meeting, yearly meeting, and other Quaker activities?
- ✿ What is the witness of the meeting? Is this witness apparent to the general public?
- ✿ Are the circumstances of those in our neighborhoods who appear to need aid considered and addressed?
- ✿ Do Friends bear testimony against oppression, oaths, war, and gambling, and in favor of simplicity, integrity, and stewardship of the earth?
- ✿ What is the general level of vitality in the meeting? Are Friends encouraged or discouraged about the state of the meeting? If we are discouraged, have we sought help from within our own meeting, from the quarterly or yearly meeting, and/or from Friends General Conference?
- ✿ What major events have occurred in the meeting since its last report, particularly as these affect the spiritual life of the meeting community?
- ✿ How do we exercise stewardship of our physical, financial, and spiritual resources?
- ✿ If the monthly meeting has any preparative meetings or worship groups under its care, how do they fare?

Responsibilities of the monthly meeting to meetings under its care. In some cases, a monthly meeting may function as a regional body of Friends, with more than one local meeting under its care. This was, in fact, the original conception: a monthly meeting consisted of several local meetings, each normally organized as a preparative meeting (so-called because it prepared business for presentation at the monthly meeting). Friends from the various preparative meetings composing a monthly meeting gathered once a month to finalize business for all of them.

This mode of organization is still used in some parts of the world, and is available in principle in Illinois Yearly Meeting. However, it has become more common for monthly meetings to consist of a single local meeting; or sometimes of one local meeting which, by reasons of size or history, is often informally identified with the monthly meeting itself, together with one or more smaller meetings organized as worship groups or preparative meetings, and held “under the care” of the monthly meeting. It should be emphasized that in the latter case, the monthly meeting is still in some sense a regional body, consisting of all of these local meetings.

A monthly meeting has the responsibility to nurture and support all the meetings in its care, to promote their spiritual life and practical growth and to care for their participants in times of need or trial. The monthly meeting must also deal promptly with any business brought to it by a meeting under its care. It must keep itself informed as to the schedule and location of all the meetings in its care, and as to their general condition, level of vitality and familiarity with the principles and practices of Friends. To help fulfill these responsibilities, it is recommended that the monthly meeting appoint one or more Friends to visit regularly with each worship group or preparative meeting under its care, according to a schedule to be worked out with the meeting being visited.

Originally, final decisions on all business concerning the local meetings composing a monthly meeting were made by the monthly

meeting. Such a system may still occasionally be appropriate, for example in the case of a worship group organized directly by the monthly meeting and held nearby. But bringing all business to the monthly meeting for finalization is impractical if the meetings are geographically distant from one another, as is often the case in Illinois Yearly Meeting; and experience has proven the value of local autonomy in meeting decision-making. In general, therefore, local meetings conduct their own affairs as they feel led.

However, decisions regarding the initiation, termination, or transfer of membership are the special province of the monthly meeting, as is the decision to hold a marriage under the care of the meeting and the conduct of the wedding itself. Preparative meetings and worship groups bring such business to their monthly meeting, and may also bring other business as seems appropriate. Major events such as funerals or memorial services may be difficult for a small meeting to conduct on its own; the monthly meeting should stand ready to assist the meetings under its care with these or other large projects.

Setting up, laying down, and reaffiliation of monthly meetings

Setting up a monthly meeting. When a group has met regularly for Divine worship in the manner of Friends and is in agreement with Friends' principles, the desire for a monthly meeting, with its additional responsibilities, expectations, and joys, may arise. To begin the process of establishing a monthly meeting, the group makes a request to the appropriate monthly or quarterly meeting or to the Continuing Committee of Illinois Yearly Meeting. The following guidelines may be used to determine which of these is the most appropriate body to receive the request:

1. If the group requesting the establishment of a monthly meeting is a part of (or held under the care of) an existing monthly meeting, it normally makes its initial request to this monthly meeting.

2. If the group is not part of an existing monthly meeting, the request is normally made to the surrounding quarterly meeting, if there is one.
3. If the group is not part of an existing monthly meeting and there is no appropriate quarterly meeting, the request is normally made to the Continuing Committee of Illinois Yearly Meeting.

If the request is directed to a monthly or quarterly meeting, that meeting appoints a clearness committee to visit with the group making the request. If the request is made to the Continuing Committee, it may appoint a clearness committee directly, or may ask the yearly meeting's Ministry and Advancement Committee to appoint a clearness committee.

The clearness committee and the group making the request jointly review the functions and responsibilities of a monthly meeting, and explore the group's readiness to undertake this step. The following queries may be helpful in this process:

- ✿ Is your meeting of sufficient strength that it is likely to survive for the foreseeable future?
- ✿ Are you prepared to exercise appropriate pastoral care for your members, to nurture their spiritual growth and to support them in times of trial?
- ✿ How familiar are the participants in your meeting with Friends' business practices and with the principles and testimonies of Friends more generally?
- ✿ Do you have enough business to require a regular business meeting?
- ✿ Are you of sufficient size and organization to hold major events such as weddings, funerals, and memorial meetings?
- ✿ Are your participants willing and able to contribute financially to your meeting?

- ✿ Do you have members prepared to take on the responsibility of serving as meeting clerk, and as meeting treasurer?
- ✿ Are you prepared to maintain and preserve records of your business proceedings, membership, and finances? Where will the records be kept?
- ✿ Will members of your meeting participate in sessions of the yearly meeting and quarterly meeting (if any), and be willing to serve on their committees, as they are able? Are you able to send these meetings regular reports on the state of your meeting, and to provide them with appropriate financial support?

The clearness committee reports to the body which appointed it, which in turn minutes its recommendation whether to establish the monthly meeting. If the recommendation is positive, and made by a monthly meeting, and the proposed new monthly meeting is to be part of a quarterly meeting, the recommendation is then forwarded to the quarterly meeting, and if the quarterly meeting concurs, to the yearly meeting. Otherwise, a positive recommendation is forwarded directly to the yearly meeting. The monthly meeting is established when the yearly meeting minutes its concurrence with the recommendation.

On establishing a new monthly meeting, the yearly meeting (typically through its Ministry and Advancement Committee) appoints a committee of welcome to visit the new meeting and provide assistance or advice as needed at its opening business session.

Establishing a new monthly meeting does not confer membership on its participants. After establishment, the meeting may receive new members and transfers of membership in the usual way. (See [“Membership.”](#))

Laying down a monthly meeting. “Laying down” a monthly meeting means formally discontinuing its meeting for business as a monthly meeting. Depending on the circumstances, the meeting for

worship may be discontinued at the same time and the meeting community effectively disbanded; or the meeting may continue in some other form, such as a worship group or preparative meeting under the care of another monthly meeting.

It is appropriate to lay down a monthly meeting when it is unable, over an extended period, to fulfill the functions and meet the responsibilities normally expected of a monthly meeting. Typically, this happens because the meeting has grown too few in numbers, but it may occasionally happen for other reasons.

The decision to lay down a meeting may be difficult: Friends may feel a strong attachment for the meeting and wish for its revival, even when the prospects are very dim. But if a plain and honest assessment of the meeting's condition makes clear that it cannot function as a monthly meeting, it should not be continued simply for sentimental reasons. Particularly if the meeting is completely inactive, neglecting to properly lay it down may result in obscurity as to the ownership of its property, difficulties for Friends desiring to transfer their memberships or record their children as members, and other problems.

Normally, a monthly meeting is laid down by minute of the yearly meeting on recommendation by the quarterly meeting, if any. A monthly meeting may also lay itself down. However, the involvement of the quarterly and yearly meetings is helpful in arranging for transfers of membership after the monthly meeting has been laid down; in working out what form, if any, the meeting will take afterwards; in assisting the meeting in the disposal of its property and archiving of its records; and in the various other details which come with the discontinuation of a meeting. In most cases, therefore, it is advisable for a monthly meeting which desires to be laid down to make a request to the quarterly meeting, or yearly meeting if there is no quarterly, rather than laying itself down directly and in isolation. The quarterly meeting (if any) and yearly meeting should in any case be promptly notified whenever a monthly meeting is laid down.

The minute laying down a monthly meeting should make clear whether its meeting for worship and any preparative meetings or worship groups under its care are also laid down; and if not, note any arrangements that have been made for their continuation.

The quarterly meeting (or yearly if there is no quarterly) normally appoints a committee to assist with the necessary arrangements. This committee meets with the participants of the meeting to be laid down and renders whatever assistance is needed. The committee arranges for transfer for the meeting's members, usually to the nearest appropriate meeting, but possibly to other meetings if individual members express a preference. Finalization of transfers should not take place until the yearly meeting minutes that the meeting is laid down. Members who cannot be contacted may also be transferred, or the committee may recommend their release from membership to the quarterly or yearly meeting. In no case should membership be left in a discontinued meeting. The committee should arrange for the meeting's records to be archived in a manner and location which keeps them accessible to the yearly meeting.

If the meeting desires to continue under the care of another meeting as a worship group or preparative meeting after it has been laid down as a monthly meeting, the committee should assist it in identifying a suitable meeting, approaching it with the request, and working out the practical details of the new relationship between the two meetings. Similar arrangements should be made for the continuation of any worship groups or preparative meetings which had been under the care of the meeting to be laid down.

If the laid-down meeting will continue in some form, it may continue to maintain a treasury, though it should carefully consider whether it is advisable to do so. If the meeting is being taken under the care of another monthly meeting, it may be appropriate to merge treasuries. If the meeting owns a meetinghouse or other real property it is strongly recommended that the property be transferred and the deed recorded.

If the laid-down meeting will not continue in any form, arrangements must be made to dispose of its treasury and other property and to discharge any debt or liabilities. These may be transferred to the quarterly or yearly meeting or to some other Quaker or charitable organization. In no case should meeting property be divided among its members. Burial grounds are generally best placed into the care of a cemetery association.

Reaffiliation of a monthly meeting. An existing monthly meeting not currently affiliated with Illinois Yearly Meeting may request affiliation. If the meeting is in the area of a quarterly meeting forming part of Illinois Yearly Meeting, the initial request is normally directed to the quarterly meeting; otherwise, it is directed to the Continuing Committee of Illinois Yearly Meeting. Whichever body receives the request normally appoints a committee to visit the meeting making the request and explore with the meeting its reasons for desiring reaffiliation; or if the Continuing Committee receives the request, it may ask the Ministry and Advancement Committee to appoint a committee. The committee reports to the body which appointed it, which then makes a recommendation to the yearly meeting. Affiliation is established by minute of the yearly meeting.

A monthly meeting may affiliate both with Illinois Yearly Meeting and with another yearly meeting. However, Friends should consider carefully the problems which may arise from dual affiliation. Dual affiliation requires substantial time and effort beyond what is involved in single affiliation, and many dually affiliated meetings find that they are unable to fully participate in either yearly meeting. In addition, yearly meetings may have conflicting expectations for how monthly meetings operate and how they relate to other levels of organization. Still, some meetings have found that dual affiliation is useful and rewarding.

A monthly meeting which withdraws from Illinois Yearly Meeting to affiliate with another yearly meeting or comparable Quaker organization is not considered to be laid down; it retains its members and records as its affiliation changes.

An existing monthly meeting in Illinois Yearly Meeting may join a quarterly meeting within ILYM with that quarterly meeting's approval. A monthly meeting which withdraws from a quarterly meeting need not withdraw from Illinois Yearly Meeting.

Worship Groups and Preparative Meetings

A local meeting need not be organized as a monthly meeting. Especially if a meeting is very small, or includes few experienced Friends, it may not feel prepared to fulfill all the functions and responsibilities normally expected of a monthly meeting. A small meeting may also find that it does not have enough business to require a regular business meeting. Depending on the circumstances, it may be appropriate to organize such a meeting as a *worship group* or *preparative meeting*.

Worship groups and preparative meetings affiliated with Illinois Yearly Meeting are normally held under the care of a monthly meeting, but are acknowledged to have a high degree of local autonomy, making their own decisions about internal matters. However, membership in the Religious Society of Friends resides in a monthly meeting; decisions to admit a Friend to membership, transfer a Friend's membership from one meeting to another, or remove a Friend from membership are made in the monthly meeting, not the preparative meeting or worship group. Likewise, monthly meetings have responsibility for the clearness process leading to marriage; requests for marriage under the care of a meeting should be directed to the monthly meeting.

Even if autonomous in its decision-making, a preparative meeting or worship group held under the care of a monthly meeting forms a part of that monthly meeting, which in these circumstances serves as a kind of regional body rather than a strictly local meeting. It is the business meeting of this regional body under whose care the preparative meeting or worship group is held, and all the meetings

involved—even a large, old and established meeting—are under this same care. The care which these meetings exercise is mutual; they hold each other in love, supporting each other spiritually and practically, offering assistance as circumstances require and abilities permit.

Distance may prevent Friends belonging to the worship group or preparative meeting from frequent participation in the monthly meeting. Even so, they form part of the monthly meeting community, and should feel welcome as full participants whenever they have the opportunity to attend its business sessions, meetings for worship, and other functions. The worship group or preparative meeting should not hesitate to request the assistance of the monthly meeting with large projects, or any other matters where the participation of the monthly meeting as a whole would be useful. Smaller meetings under the care of a monthly meeting may also expect periodic visitors from the monthly meeting, who should provide support as needed and keep the monthly meeting informed about the state of the smaller meeting. For more information on the relation between monthly meetings and the meetings under their care, see [“Responsibilities of the monthly meeting to meetings under its care.”](#)

Preparative meetings and worship groups do not share the same level of responsibility to the yearly meeting and quarterly as a monthly meeting: there is no general expectation that they will send representatives to the yearly meeting Continuing Committee or host its sessions, that they will send State of Society Reports, or that they will provide direct financial support to the yearly and quarterly meetings. However, they may do any of these things at their option. Smaller meetings are tenderly urged to assist their monthly meetings as needed in fulfilling these responsibilities.

The following table summarizes the differences among different types of local meetings. More detailed explanation of these differences follows after the table.

Difference Among Different Types of Local Meetings

	Informal, Independent Worship Group	Recognized Worship Group under the minuted care of a meeting	Preparative Meeting	Monthly Meeting
Holds regular meeting for worship	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Has official affiliation with Illinois Yearly Meeting & the Religious Society of Friends	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Holds an official meeting for business	No	No	Yes	Yes
May receive, release or transfer members	No	No	No	Yes
May approve requests for marriage	No	No	No	Yes
May have more than one local meeting under its care	No	No	No	Yes
Reports to	Optional	Optional	Optional	Expected

Illinois Yearly Meeting, and supports it financially				
Is set up and laid down by minute of	N/A	Monthly meeting	Quarterly meeting (or yearly meeting if no available quarterly) on recommendation of the monthly meeting	Yearly meeting on recommendation of the quarterly meeting, if any

Worship groups

A worship group is simply a group of individuals who meet together on a regular basis for worship in the manner of Friends. Such groups are often organized on a completely informal and unofficial basis. Over time, a worship group may gradually come to function more and more as an established Friends meeting; many of the meetings in Illinois Yearly Meeting began in just this way.

The formation of new worship groups is encouraged in all areas where an existing meeting is not available. Individuals organizing a new worship group often find it beneficial to seek the advice and support of an existing meeting (typically the nearest monthly meeting), even if it is some distance away. A monthly meeting may lend informal assistance to a worship group without formally taking the worship group under its care.

An informally organized worship group which has not affiliated with a yearly meeting or analogous Quaker organization should avoid representing itself as an official body of the Religious Society of Friends. Any worship group which anticipates long-term existence is encouraged to seek affiliation.

To affiliate with Illinois Yearly Meeting, a worship group normally makes a request to a monthly meeting which already forms part of the yearly meeting. The monthly meeting appoints a clearness committee to visit the worship group and explore with it the practical and spiritual issues involved in affiliation under the monthly meeting's care. Appropriate topics for discussion include the nature and basis of meeting for worship in the manner of Friends, the familiarity and consonance of the worship group with Friends' testimonies and practices, expectations regarding the relation between the worship group and the monthly meeting after affiliation, and any other pertinent matters. The following sample queries may be used in exploring these areas:

- ✿ What experience do you have with the Religious Society of Friends?

- ✿ How do you understand worship in the manner of Friends? Do you approach worship as communal seeking? Do you experience it as uniting?
- ✿ How do you understand Friends' testimonies and their role in your daily lives?
- ✿ Describe the expected relationship between the worship group and the monthly meeting after affiliation.
- ✿ What are you doing as a group to know each other better? What is the quality of your potlucks or other community events?
- ✿ Are you aware and respectful of the individual differences within your worship group?
- ✿ Are you prepared to support each other spiritually and in times of need?
- ✿ If there are families with children, have you considered how to provide for their religious education?
- ✿ How will you participate in the yearly and quarterly (if any) meeting?

The clearness committee then reports back to the monthly meeting, which records in its minutes a decision whether to take the worship group under its care. A decision to take the worship group under the monthly meeting's care establishes the worship group as a part of the monthly meeting, the quarterly meeting (if any) to which the monthly meeting belongs, and Illinois Yearly Meeting. The monthly meeting should report such decisions to the quarterly and yearly meetings. A worship group held under the minuted care of another meeting may also be known as a *recognized meeting* (or, in older terminology, an *allowed* or *indulged* meeting).

Affiliating a worship group with a monthly meeting does not confer membership on the worship group's participants. Participants in a

worship group may become members of a monthly meeting in the usual ways, before or after affiliation. (See “[Membership](#).”)

In exceptional circumstances, it may be appropriate for a worship group to affiliate under the direct care of a quarterly meeting or Illinois Yearly Meeting, rather than a monthly meeting. A quarterly meeting may take worship groups under its care using the same procedure as a monthly meeting. Requests for affiliation under the direct care of Illinois Yearly Meeting should be addressed to the yearly meeting’s Continuing Committee, which may appoint a clearness committee directly or ask the Ministry and Advancement Committee to do so. The clearness committee reports to the body that appointed it, which in turn makes a recommendation to the yearly meeting. Affiliation is established by minute of the yearly meeting in its annual business sessions.

As the name implies, worship groups are primarily for worship, with minimal business. Historically, all business pertaining to a worship group held under the care of a monthly meeting was handled by the monthly meeting; and such an arrangement may occasionally still be appropriate, particularly if the worship group is located close enough for its participants regularly to attend the monthly meeting for business. But in many circumstances, it is appropriate for a worship group to hold its own informal decision-making sessions, to decide such practical matters as the time and location of meetings. Such decisions should be promptly reported to the monthly meeting. If the worship group finds that it has sufficient business to hold such sessions on a regular basis, it should consider whether the time has come to request the establishment of a preparative or monthly meeting.

If a worship group under the care of another meeting has become unable to sustain itself, with no expectation of revival, it should be “laid down,” or formally discontinued. The decision to lay down a worship group is normally made by the worship group itself in consultation with the monthly meeting under whose care it is held, and minuted by the monthly meeting in its business sessions. In

special circumstances—for example, if a worship group has become completely inactive and its participants scattered—the monthly meeting may also lay down the worship group without such consultation; but monthly meetings are strongly advised to consult with the participants of the worship group if this is realistically possible. When a worship group under the care of a monthly meeting is laid down, the monthly meeting should report it to the quarterly (if any) and yearly meetings.

Preparative meetings

A preparative meeting is the business meeting of a single local meeting, forming part of a larger monthly meeting. By extension, the body of Friends whose business is conducted in such a meeting is also known as a preparative meeting.

Preparative meetings were originally so called because they prepared business for presentation at the monthly meeting, much as a committee might do. Decisions were finalized in the monthly meeting, not in the preparative meeting itself. In Illinois Yearly Meeting today, there is no official expectation that a preparative meeting will send business (other than matters pertaining to membership or marriage) to its monthly meeting for final decision.

In some yearly meetings a local meeting seeking establishment as a monthly meeting is often expected to pass some time first as a preparative meeting, so the name has sometimes been understood as implying preparation to become a monthly meeting. In Illinois Yearly Meeting there is no such expectation, nor any expectation that every preparative meeting will eventually seek establishment as a separate monthly meeting. A preparative meeting which does wish to become a monthly meeting is advised to refer to the section on [monthly meetings](#).

A preparative meeting appoints a clerk. If it maintains a treasury, it should appoint a different person as treasurer. The meeting may also appoint a recording clerk, religious education committee, or such

other positions and committees as seem useful. However, a preparative meeting which finds that a large number of positions and committees are called for would do well to consider whether the time has come to request the establishment of a monthly meeting. Likewise, a preparative meeting may own a building or other property; but a meeting which is in a position to function as a property-owning institution will also often find that it is prepared to function as a monthly meeting.

A preparative meeting should keep minutes of its business proceedings, and make sure that these and any other records are properly archived. (See “[Archivist](#).”)

To set up a preparative meeting, a group (typically an existing worship group) makes a request to the monthly meeting under whose care the preparative meeting is to be held. The monthly meeting appoints a clearness committee to visit the group and explore with it its readiness for this step. If the group has not previously had formal affiliation with a yearly meeting or analogous Quaker organization, this exploration may include a consideration of many of the same topics as in the case of a worship group seeking affiliation; see the queries for [Worship Groups](#). Whether the group has had previous affiliation or not, the discussion should include a consideration of the nature and basis of Friends’ business practices, the group’s reasons for seeking the establishment of a business meeting, and the practical details of the preparative meeting’s relation with the monthly meeting. The following sample queries may be useful in this process:

- ✿ Do you understand Friends’ business practice as a communal seeking of Divine guidance?
- ✿ What is your experience of Friends’ business practice?
- ✿ Have you read the section on “[Friends’ Manner of Decision Making](#)”?
- ✿ Do you have enough business to require a regular business meeting?

- ✿ Are you prepared to keep records of your business meetings?
Where will the records be kept?
- ✿ Are you familiar with Illinois Yearly Meeting's Faith and Practice? What other Quaker sources do you consult?
- ✿ Do you anticipate having a treasury? How will it be administered?
- ✿ Do you have individuals willing and able to serve as clerk and treasurer?

The clearness committee reports back to the monthly meeting, which records in its minutes a recommendation whether to establish the preparative meeting. If the recommendation is positive and the monthly meeting is part of a quarterly meeting, this recommendation is forwarded to the quarterly meeting. The preparative meeting is established when the quarterly meeting approves a minute concurring with the recommendation. The quarterly meeting should report the decision to the yearly meeting. If the monthly meeting is not part of a quarterly meeting, a positive recommendation is forwarded directly to the yearly meeting, and the preparative meeting is established when the yearly meeting approves a minute concurring with the recommendation. After the establishment of the preparative meeting has been approved, the monthly meeting appoints a committee of welcome to visit it and provide advice or assistance as needed at its opening business session.

“Laying down” a preparative meeting means officially discontinuing its business meeting. Typically, this might happen because the meeting has become too weak in numbers or has too little business to sustain a regular business meeting. When a preparative meeting is laid down, its meeting for worship may be laid down at the same time; or it may continue as a worship group.

Normally, a preparative meeting is laid down by minute of the quarterly meeting on recommendation of the monthly meeting of

which the preparative meeting is a part. A preparative meeting may also lay itself down. In any case, the monthly meeting, the quarterly meeting (if any), and the yearly meeting should be promptly informed. When the meeting is laid down, care should be taken to see that its records are properly archived, and appropriate arrangements have been made for its treasury and other property. (See “[Laying down a monthly meeting](#).”)

Quarterly Meetings

The Quarterly Meeting is designed to bring together for inspiration and counsel a larger group and to consider more varied interests than any single meeting embraces. Its most helpful function should be to aid and encourage the Monthly Meetings composing it to greater interest and service, and to give its members an increasing vision of the truth. It should be diligent in seeking opportunities to gather together groups which may be organized into meetings and should always be ready to help Monthly Meetings whenever they ask for advice or assistance.

Friends General Conference, 1927

A quarterly meeting is a regional body of Friends, comprising more than one monthly meeting and forming part of a larger yearly meeting. By tradition, quarterly meetings hold their business sessions four times each year, but it has been found useful in some cases to maintain a less frequent schedule, particularly if the quarterly meeting covers a wide geographic area or includes few meetings of sufficient size to host its sessions regularly.

Quarterly meetings serve several purposes. First, it is in the quarterly meeting that monthly meetings report in detail the recent condition of their meeting communities, with an opportunity for the gathered Friends to respond, offer advice or assistance if needed, and take

inspiration or new ideas when presented. At least once each year, representatives of each monthly meeting in the quarterly read aloud their monthly meeting's State of Society Report in the quarterly meeting's business session. Time should be left after each meeting's report for Friends to speak as they feel led in response. For information on the composition of these reports, see "[State of Society Reports](#)."

Because the quarterly meeting is the venue in which monthly meetings present these reports, and the body which regularly considers them with members of the monthly meeting present and participating, the quarterly meeting serves as an important source of support, guidance, and assistance to local meetings, including those experiencing difficulty. Meetings which find themselves in need of assistance are urged to bring such matters to their quarterly meetings. Help is also available from the Illinois Yearly Meeting Ministry and Advancement Committee, and from the Illinois Yearly Meeting Field Secretary.

Quarterly meetings serve as the appropriate bodies to decide issues which affect Friends on a region-wide basis, and to coordinate the efforts of local meetings when such coordination is needed. Projects which are too large or too general for a single monthly meeting to take on may more naturally be assumed by the quarterly meeting. In petitioning the state or addressing issues of public concern, the voice of the quarterly meeting will usually bear more weight than that of a monthly meeting.

Quarterly meetings serve to bring together Friends from different local meetings and promote a broader sense of community among Friends. Quarterly meetings may hold retreats, workshops, or social events, either in conjunction with their business sessions or separately, to build up connections among their local meetings. Meetings with few children may especially find that quarterly meetings and other regional gatherings provide a valuable opportunity for young Friends to find companionship and a sense of Quaker community.

Quarterly meetings serve as a valuable forum for the preliminary consideration of business to be brought before the yearly meeting. Monthly meetings with proposals to put before the yearly meeting are urged to bring such matters first to their quarterly meeting (if there is one), unless the next session of the yearly meeting falls before the next session of the quarterly meeting, and the matter is too urgent to delay. The quarterly meeting may also bring to the yearly meeting business which originated in the quarterly meeting itself, rather than any of its monthly meetings.

Finally, quarterly meetings have specific responsibilities in the setting up and laying down of meetings. In particular, a quarterly meeting may set up or lay down a preparative meeting on the advice of its monthly meeting. (See “[Preparative meetings](#).”) In addition, proposals to set up or lay down a monthly meeting are normally approved by its quarterly meeting (if any), before being forwarded to the yearly meeting for final approval. (See “[Setting up, laying down, and reaffiliation of monthly meetings](#).”) A quarterly meeting may add an existing monthly meeting which is part of Illinois Yearly Meeting at the request of the monthly meeting.

Each quarterly meeting appoints a clerk, who also serves as representative to the Continuing Committee of Illinois Yearly Meeting. Quarterly meetings may appoint a treasurer, recording clerk, and such other committees and offices as seem useful. Quarterly meetings must keep accurate records of their business and finances, and archive them properly. (See “[Archivist](#).”)

Decisions of the quarterly meeting are made by the Friends gathered in the quarterly meeting business sessions. They do not require the approval or ratification of the monthly meetings which compose the quarterly meeting, though such approval may be sought in cases where the quarterly meeting deems it helpful to do so. Quarterly meetings must respect the local autonomy of their constituent meetings, and may not override their decisions or direct their affairs in purely internal matters.

Setting up and laying down quarterly meetings

To set up a new quarterly meeting, approval must first be secured from each of the monthly meetings which are to become a part of it. Any monthly meetings which already form part of a quarterly meeting should present the plan for establishing the new quarterly meeting to the existing quarterly meeting and seek its views on the matter. Monthly meetings are advised against belonging to more than one quarterly meeting simultaneously, so joining a new quarterly meeting will normally mean leaving the old one.

After the approval of all monthly meetings has been obtained and the issue considered in any existing quarterly meetings, the proposal is forwarded either to Illinois Yearly Meeting, or to its Continuing Committee. Whichever group receives the request appoints a clearness committee, or may request the Ministry and Advancement Committee to appoint a clearness committee. The clearness committee visits with the local meetings which are to be part of the proposed quarterly meeting to explore their readiness for this step. The following queries may be helpful in this process:

- ✿ What do you see as the spiritual and practical benefits of establishing a new quarterly meeting?
- ✿ What kinds of support can you provide as a quarterly meeting to the yearly meeting and to your monthly meetings? What kinds of support do you expect to receive from the yearly and monthly meetings?
- ✿ How strong is the commitment of each of the monthly meetings involved?
- ✿ Will you have a treasury? How will funds be raised? How will they be used? How will the treasury be administered?
- ✿ How often will you meet and where? Have you considered potential scheduling conflicts?
- ✿ How will your gatherings be planned?

- ✿ Will your sessions include worship? business? workshops? retreats? fellowship? community building? How will you decide on the relative balance?
- ✿ Do you have any qualms, fears, or reservations about establishing a quarterly meeting?

The committee may also meet with Friends outside the proposed quarterly meeting to gauge the impact the establishment of the new meeting might have on existing quarterly meetings, and on the yearly meeting as a whole. The committee reports to Illinois Yearly Meeting; the new quarterly meeting is established when the yearly meeting minutes its approval in its annual business sessions. After minuting establishment, the yearly meeting (typically through its Ministry and Advancement Committee) appoints a committee of welcome to attend the opening session of the new quarterly and provide assistance or advice as it begins to conduct business.

If a quarterly meeting is unable, over an extended period, to fulfill the functions and meet the responsibilities normally expected of a quarterly meeting, it is appropriate to lay it down. Normally, this is accomplished by minute of the yearly meeting, though in principle a quarterly meeting may also lay itself down. In either case, it is strongly urged that the approval of all functioning monthly meetings which form part of the quarterly meeting be obtained before the quarterly meeting is officially laid down. If the quarterly meeting lays itself down, it should inform the yearly meeting promptly of this decision.

Whichever body lays down the quarterly meeting appoints a committee to assist with the arrangements, or may ask the yearly meeting's Ministry and Advancement Committee to appoint such a committee. This committee should see to it that provision is made for the archiving of the meeting's records in a manner and location which keeps them accessible to Illinois Yearly Meeting. Deposit in the University of Illinois Library is recommended for this purpose. If

the quarterly meeting has a treasury or other property, the committee should see that these are disposed of in an appropriate fashion, such as transferring them to the yearly meeting, dividing them among the monthly meetings, or donating them to some other Friends or charitable organization. The advice of Friends who were involved in the quarterly meeting should be a major consideration in deciding how to dispose of property.

Monthly meetings which do not belong to a quarterly meeting

Originally, Illinois Yearly Meeting was organized so that all of its constituent monthly meetings belonged to a quarterly meeting. The quarterly meetings formed a systematic intervening level between the monthly meetings and the yearly meeting: business, communications and finances passed between the monthly meetings and the yearly meeting through the quarterly meetings, which also played an important role in such matters as nominating the clerk of the yearly meeting and appointing the equivalent of the Continuing Committee.

For historical reasons, Illinois Yearly Meeting now includes a number of monthly meetings which are not part of a quarterly meeting. Such meetings may find that some of the functions of a quarterly meeting are well-served by other regional gatherings. However, business which is strictly internal to Illinois Yearly Meeting is not generally considered at such gatherings. If a monthly meeting is not part of a quarterly meeting which can provide preliminary consideration of proposals before they are brought to the yearly meeting, the monthly meeting should submit such proposals first to the Continuing Committee, unless the next session of the yearly meeting falls before the next session of the Continuing Committee, and the matter is too urgent to delay.

Regional gatherings which are not quarterly meetings of Illinois Yearly Meeting may not set up or lay down a preparative meeting as part of Illinois Yearly Meeting. Nor does Illinois Yearly Meeting

require that the approval of such gatherings be secured before a monthly meeting or quarterly meeting is set up or laid down as part of Illinois Yearly Meeting. Proposals for setting up or laying down meetings which are part of Illinois Yearly Meeting but not part of a quarterly meeting are directed to the Continuing Committee or to the yearly meeting. (See “[Setting up, laying down and reaffiliation of monthly meetings](#),” “[Preparative meetings](#),” and “[Setting up and laying down quarterly meetings](#).”)

The Yearly Meeting

A yearly meeting of the Religious Society of Friends is an association of monthly meetings, preparative meetings, worship groups, and quarterly meetings. Its constituent meetings are usually located in the same general geographic region, and share a similar perspective on faith and practice. As the name indicates, a yearly meeting gathers annually to conduct its business. That business may include consideration of spiritual concerns of its members and calls to witness to the wider world, as well as such organizational matters as care of property, budgeting and finances, selection of officers and committee members, planning for future events, and other concerns brought forward by monthly meetings, quarterly meetings, or yearly meeting committees.

Illinois Yearly Meeting was established in 1875. Throughout its history, it has included local meetings across a wide region, centered on Illinois but never limited to it. (See “[History of Illinois Yearly Meeting](#).”) The processes by which a monthly meeting joins or leaves Illinois Yearly Meeting are described in the section on [monthly meetings](#)).

Functions of a yearly meeting

A yearly meeting, like any Friends meeting, is a community in which Friends worship together, care for each other, seek together the leadings of the Spirit, and support one another's spiritual growth. Yearly meetings serve their membership by furthering connections among Friends, fostering a more expansive and fuller sense of Quaker community than Friends might attain from their local meetings alone. These connections form as Friends come together for the annual sessions of the yearly meeting, through intervisitation, and by participation in the common work of the yearly meeting through committee meetings or other gatherings throughout the year. Much of the work of the yearly meeting is grounded in its care and concern for the spiritual growth and well-being of its constituent meetings and individual members.

Yearly meetings also help to advance the cause of Quaker witness to the world. Every monthly meeting undertakes such witness; but a yearly meeting, especially one that serves as large a geographical area as Illinois Yearly Meeting, is in a position to embark on collective action more effectively and with a more powerful voice than any individual meeting. This sort of activity can take a number of forms. It might involve charitable or relief work. It might take the form of peace and reconciliation work or draft counseling. It might involve using our collective voice to urge a civic policy consistent with Quaker values. It might be for the purpose of involvement in the wider Quaker world or any other expression of Friends' testimonies.

The yearly meeting writes and promulgates its own book of Faith and Practice, which articulates the guiding principles, organizational processes, and collected expressions of faith of Friends it serves. In doing so it provides a structure that serves to affirm what it means to be a Quaker in general and an ILYM Quaker in particular.

Relationship of the yearly meeting to individual members, monthly meetings and other regional meetings

Individuals are members of the yearly meeting by virtue of their membership in one of its constituent monthly meetings. In the case

of Illinois Yearly Meeting, the authority of the yearly meeting is not over the monthly meetings individually but rather through them collectively. Monthly meetings are independent financial entities from Illinois Yearly Meeting. They control their own finances and own their own property.

As described in “[Setting up, laying down, and reaffiliation of monthly meetings](#),” the quarterly and yearly meetings have a role in the establishment and laying down of monthly meetings. In addition, the yearly meeting has a responsibility to nurture the spiritual health and growth of monthly meetings and individual members of all ages. Illinois Yearly Meeting has put in place a number of positions and committees to support the spiritual care of the monthly meetings and their members, including the Field Secretary, the Youth Coordinator, the Ministry and Advancement Committee, the Children’s Religious Education Committee, and others.

Relationship of Illinois Yearly Meeting and Clear Creek Monthly Meeting

Illinois Yearly Meeting has a longstanding close relationship with Clear Creek Monthly Meeting. Clear Creek Monthly Meeting has met in the vicinity of McNabb, Illinois since before the establishment of Illinois Yearly Meeting. In recent history, Clear Creek Friends have met for worship at the Yearly Meeting House or at the Clear Creek House of Illinois Yearly Meeting. The yearly meeting and monthly meeting therefore have a unique relationship, and both seek to be continually mindful to communicate and clarify their respective needs and responsibilities with regard to the buildings and grounds.

Relationship of Illinois Yearly Meeting with the wider Quaker world

Illinois Yearly Meeting benefits from association with national and international Quaker organizations that support the yearly meeting in various ways and help further its witness to the world. Illinois

Yearly Meeting is affiliated with Friends General Conference and sends representatives to serve on FGC's Central Committee, its governing board. Illinois Yearly Meeting also sends representatives to the American Friends Service Committee Corporation and to the Friends Committee on National Legislation General Committee. Illinois Yearly Meeting is affiliated with Friends World Committee for Consultation, and sends representatives to periodic international gatherings of that organization. As the yearly meeting is moved, and Friends agree to serve, Illinois Yearly Meeting sends representatives to other Quaker organizations such as Quaker Earthcare Witness; Friends for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer Concerns; Friends Peace Teams; and others.

Illinois Yearly Meeting communicates with other yearly meetings around the world through the tradition of sending and receiving epistles, or letters, composed at the annual sessions. Excerpts of selected epistles from other yearly meetings are read aloud during the annual sessions, and the ILYM epistle is sent to other yearly meetings to share spiritual concerns, challenges, leadings, and accomplishments of Illinois Yearly Meeting.

Organization and Structure of Illinois Yearly Meeting

The corporation. In 2004, Illinois Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends was incorporated in the State of Illinois under the Illinois General Not For Profit Corporation Act as a regional church. (Previously, Illinois Yearly Meeting had been organized in 1875 as a trust under 1872 enabling legislation.) Our incorporation bylaws were approved by the yearly meeting in 2007, stressing the continuity of operation of Illinois Yearly Meeting and its Quaker business principles and practices. Incorporation provides protection of individual officers or stewards of the yearly meeting from legal liability by shifting such liability to the corporation. The clerk, assistant clerk, and two stewards act as the Board of Directors for the corporation, and a treasurer serves as the Registered Agent for Illinois Yearly Meeting, the liaison between the State of Illinois and

Illinois Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends. The Board of Directors represents Illinois Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends in matters that require legal authority.

Ownership of property. Illinois Yearly Meeting may purchase and own property. The Illinois Yearly Meetinghouse, now on the National Register of Historic Places, was built in 1874 near what is now McNabb, Illinois in anticipation of the first sessions of the yearly meeting. Over the years, additional land has been purchased and various changes have been made to land owned on both the south and north sides of “Quaker Lane” or County Road 350 North adjacent to the 1874 meetinghouse grounds: construction of a dining hall later converted to the Junior Yearly Meetinghouse, construction of a dormitory, construction of a campground with bathhouse, the relocation of the Junior Yearly Meetinghouse to the north property, the disassembly of the dormitory, and the repurposing of its materials to build six cabins on the north property. In 2009 the yearly meeting purchased approximately six acres immediately to the west of the meetinghouse property, including a farmhouse that was subsequently renovated and is now known as Clear Creek House of Illinois Yearly Meeting.

Officers of the yearly meeting. Officers of Illinois Yearly Meeting are nominated by committee and approved by the assembled body. The following are descriptions of officers that have been of service to Illinois Yearly Meeting, but this list does not limit or prescribe the possibilities. The yearly meeting may create officers and assign responsibilities to best serve its circumstances and needs at a given time.

The work of the *presiding clerk* is to prepare the agenda for the business meeting, to help set the worshipful tone of the gathering, to recognize those who wish to speak, to collect and articulate the sense of the meeting, and to help maintain right order in the proceedings. They should keep informed of ongoing activities of ILYM during the year so as to be responsive to issues as they arise. The clerk also carries on correspondence relating to the business of the yearly

meeting. A clerk's committee is appointed to assist them in this role. The assistant presiding clerk, who is ordinarily an incoming or outgoing presiding clerk, assists with the clerk's duties and may substitute for the clerk if needed. Both the clerk and the assistant clerk should be members of the Religious Society of Friends.

The *recording clerk* composes minutes to be read back to the assembled body for approval, thus recording the decisions and actions of the yearly meeting. The assistant recording clerk, ordinarily an incoming or outgoing recording clerk, assists as needed.

The *reading clerk* reviews incoming epistles from other yearly meetings, and selects portions of these to be read at the start of business sessions. They may also be asked to read other items to the yearly meeting, and they serve on the committee that drafts the annual outgoing epistle from Illinois Yearly Meeting to the wider Quaker world.

The financial transactions of the yearly meeting are entrusted to a *treasurer* or *co-treasurers*, who receive contributions to the yearly meeting and pay out obligations or contributions as directed by the yearly meeting. They make reports on the financial status of the yearly meeting, and work closely with the finance committee, the stewards, and committee clerks as needed.

The *stewards* of Illinois Yearly Meeting have the responsibility and authority to manage the real estate and tangible property of ILYM, at the direction of the yearly meeting. They may appoint and/or engage persons or companies as required for these purposes. Stewards represent the Yearly Meeting in renovating the buildings and grounds; in securing insurance; and in handling easements, leases and other management needs as they arise. Among these may be planning, zoning, and building permit issues, and property tax matters. Illinois Yearly Meeting may direct others to assist the stewards in specific matters.

In addition to the positions listed above, the yearly meeting may appoint Friends to new or existing positions as needed to accomplish the work of the yearly meeting. Examples of such positions are *editor(s)* of a yearly meeting publication, a *records librarian* to oversee the collection and archiving of yearly meeting records, and a website coordinator to oversee and update a yearly meeting website.

Employees of the yearly meeting. Illinois Yearly Meeting may employ individuals to serve the yearly meeting as needs arise and funds are available. The yearly meeting in its annual sessions minutes the desire and financial ability to hire an employee. The yearly meeting may delegate the work of writing a position description, posting announcements, and interviewing and selecting a candidate to a committee which is given oversight for a particular position. The final approval for hiring is given by the yearly meeting in its annual sessions, unless delegated to the [Continuing Committee](#). A personnel manual sets forth guidelines for hiring, compensation, and oversight of the yearly meeting's employees. The number of employees and their position descriptions are at the discretion of the yearly meeting.

The following paragraphs give brief descriptions of employee positions that are serving identified needs of Illinois Yearly Meeting at the time of this writing. Detailed descriptions of the qualifications, responsibilities, and expectations for each position are maintained in the personnel manual.

The many duties of the *Administrative Coordinator* include keeping a calendar of ILYM-related events and disseminating yearly meeting news, announcements, and information. Certain duties of the Administrative Coordinator are associated with the annual sessions, including the coordination of the many logistic details that are necessary for the sessions to run smoothly.

The *Children's Religious Education Coordinator* works closely with the appropriate committee of the yearly meeting to plan and carry out Quaker religious educational programs and activities for ILYM children younger than high school age. They serve as a resource

person on issues concerning the religious education of children for monthly meetings and worship groups within Illinois Yearly Meeting.

The *Youth Coordinator* works closely with the appropriate committee of the yearly meeting and the clerks of the high school young Friends to plan and carry out gatherings of young Friends, both at the annual sessions and throughout the year. They are expected to help teenage Friends find and participate in experiences related to spiritual development, service, and leadership.

Illinois Yearly Meeting may also see fit to engage paid independent contractors who are not employees of the Yearly Meeting to serve identified needs. Those have long included a *Field Secretary* whose work, in conjunction with the Ministry and Advancement Committee, is to focus on the spiritual nurture of Illinois Yearly Meeting's constituent meetings and worship groups. That work may include visitation; offering workshops, retreats, or meetings for reconciliation; responding to needs that have been brought forward; and/or encouraging the work of the Spirit in local or regional meetings.

Committees of the yearly meeting. Much of the work of the yearly meeting is carried out by committees that meet as needed during and between the Illinois Yearly Meeting annual sessions to accomplish their work. A committee is often where Friends first bring concerns for corporate discernment, where proposals for actions are drafted and seasoned, where minutes are composed, where the budget is drafted, and where Friends work together on maintenance or other tasks related to the buildings and grounds. Committees bring forward proposals for the yearly meeting's consideration, and they need its approval before taking action, for example, before committing funds or speaking on behalf of the yearly meeting.

Standing committees, in general, include committees that address ongoing needs and concerns of the yearly meeting, including spiritual support of its members, support for the organizational and

fiscal well-being of the yearly meeting, maintenance of its property, and support for the service and witness of the yearly meeting.

Matching the gifts and talents of individual Friends with the needs of the yearly meeting and its work is the concern of the *Nominating Committee*. Nominating committee members seek out Friends to serve as yearly meeting officers, committee members, committee clerks, and representatives from Illinois Yearly Meeting to wider Quaker organizations, and the committee brings their names to the yearly meeting for consideration.

The *Finance Committee* is responsible for preparing the proposed annual budget for Illinois Yearly Meeting; for providing guidance and support to the treasurer(s); and for putting into place procedures that serve the yearly meeting in receiving, maintaining, and disbursing funds.

Among the responsibilities of the *Ministry and Advancement Committee* is care for the spiritual life of monthly meetings and worship groups in the yearly meeting. It undertakes this in conjunction with the ILYM Field Secretary, for whom it is the committee of oversight. Members of the committee have often undertaken visitation among meetings and organized activities to promote spiritual development among Friends. The committee may be called upon to assist meetings which are struggling with conflict or other internal issues.

While standing committees are generally expected to exist long-term, the yearly meeting may from time to time decide to alter the configuration of its committees to adapt to changing circumstances. Whatever the particular configuration of committees at a given time, the yearly meeting is advised to consider making provisions for committee oversight of such matters as:

- ✿ Maintenance of buildings and grounds
- ✿ Policies and practices regarding yearly meeting employees

- ✿ Support for religious education at the monthly meeting and yearly meeting levels
- ✿ Support for High School Young Friends
- ✿ Editing and distribution of yearly meeting publications, both paper and electronic
- ✿ Provision for the long-term well-being of the yearly meeting, both materially and spiritually
- ✿ Maintenance of a yearly meeting handbook of current policies and practices
- ✿ Advancement of Friends' testimonies

Up-to-date descriptions of the composition and responsibilities of ILYM committees are maintained in the [ILYM handbook](#).

Ad hoc committees may be appointed by the yearly meeting to address a specific concern which is relatively short-lived, which lies outside the scope of any standing committee, and/or which requires input from several existing committees. The members of the committee, the expected tenure of the committee, and the body to which the committee will report are decided at the time it is formed. When the specific concern has been addressed to the satisfaction of the yearly meeting, the committee is laid down.

The Annual Sessions

Illinois Yearly Meeting gathers for several days of annual sessions each summer at the historic Illinois Yearly Meetinghouse near McNabb, Illinois. Members and attenders of constituent monthly meetings, preparative meetings, and worship groups, members of other yearly meetings, representatives from wider Quaker organizations, and individual seekers are all welcome and

encouraged to attend the annual sessions. In addition to daily sessions to consider the business of the Yearly Meeting, the annual gathering ordinarily includes invited speakers, worship-sharing groups, workshops, programs for children and teens, time for committee meetings, time for worship, and opportunities for recreation and fellowship.

For many Friends, the annual gathering is a time of spiritual refreshment and renewal, as they encounter or renew relationships with Friends from other meetings and engage together in worship and in the work of the Spirit. Speakers from within the yearly meeting and beyond it share their work and bring insight and inspiration. Joy may be found in singing, in shared work, in the beauty of the landscape, in watching the children grow from year to year.

Bringing Business to the Yearly Meeting. Most of the business at yearly meeting annual sessions comes by way of its committees, whose representatives report on the committee's work and bring proposals for action by the yearly meeting as needed.

An individual Friend with a concern or leading should ordinarily take it first to their monthly meeting or to an appropriate yearly meeting committee. If a monthly meeting decides that a concern should be raised to a wider group, the next step is for the monthly meeting clerk or representative to take the concern to a quarterly meeting, if available, or to the Continuing Committee of the yearly meeting. From a quarterly meeting or the Continuing Committee, a concern may be placed on the agenda for consideration at the yearly meeting annual sessions, or it may be referred to a yearly meeting committee for further discernment.

A concern brought forward by a yearly meeting committee would similarly be brought to the yearly meeting Continuing Committee, which would proceed as described above. While such a process is not mandated, it allows leadings and concerns to be examined and held in the Light by smaller groups, so that by the time a recommendation

or call for action comes to the yearly meeting it has been well “seasoned.”

Decision-making at the yearly meeting level. Friends in attendance at the business meeting during the annual sessions are welcome to speak as recognized by the clerk. Decisions are made through discernment of the sense of the gathered body of Illinois Yearly Meeting at the annual sessions and need not be ratified by its constituent monthly meetings.

There may be situations in which the yearly meeting cannot reach unity or for some other reason is not able to make a decision during the annual sessions. The yearly meeting at its annual sessions can choose to minute that Continuing Committee has authority to act on specific items during the year.

Decisions and actions of the yearly meeting are articulated and approved during the session and are recorded as written minutes. The recorded minutes of the yearly meeting make up the record of its actions and are published in booklet form each year after the annual sessions and also made available to all on the yearly meeting website. The minute books are archived in the Illinois History and Lincoln Collections of the library of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

Epistles and exercises. During the annual sessions a committee is appointed to write an epistle, or letter, to Friends in other yearly meetings and organizations. The epistle conveys the yearly meeting’s spiritual message, based on the concerns, actions, and insights arising during the yearly meeting sessions. After approval by the yearly meeting body, the epistle is communicated to Friends worldwide.

It has been the practice of Illinois Yearly Meeting to have a separate committee write a summary of “exercises” of the yearly meeting sessions, reflecting that which has inspired or moved the meeting during its gathering. The exercises may record events or significant ministry that would not appear in the business session minutes. Both

the exercises and epistle are recorded in the yearly meeting minute book, but, ordinarily, only the epistle is sent to other groups of Friends.

The Jonathan W. Plummer Lecture. Beginning with the 1961 sessions, Illinois Yearly Meeting has followed a tradition of having one of its members present at the annual sessions an address named in honor of Illinois Yearly Meeting's first clerk and the "father" of Friends General Conference, Jonathan W. Plummer. Friends giving this lecture have typically chosen to share their spiritual journey or spiritual insights or concerns from their lives. After presentation at the annual sessions, the Plummer Lecture is published, disseminated and archived at the library of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

Children, High School Friends, and Adult Young Friends. The young people of Illinois Yearly Meeting are a treasured part of the community. At the annual sessions, the children participate in a religious education program planned by yearly meeting Friends. There are opportunities for organized recreation, crafts, service projects, and free play.

High School Friends, under the supervision of the Youth Oversight Committee and Youth Coordinator, help to plan their own yearly meeting experience, and they appoint their own clerks to oversee their business meetings and to record minutes. They write an epistle to share their experiences with the wider Quaker world. Throughout the year High School Friends and their adult advisers plan additional gatherings for themselves, or host or participate in gatherings with Friends from neighboring yearly meetings.

Adult Young Friends, from ages about 18 to about 35, may plan gatherings, outings, business meetings, or other activities specifically for Adult Young Friends in addition to participating in the scheduled yearly meeting proceedings. Adult Young Friends may appoint their own clerks and write an epistle describing their particular experiences and concerns. They may plan activities and gatherings throughout the year as time and energy permit.

Planning and carrying out the work of the annual sessions. Planning for the annual sessions has typically been divided into different areas of responsibility which are delegated on a rotating basis among planning groups, each composed of members of monthly meetings from a designated geographic region of the yearly meeting. The planning and preparation tasks include choosing a theme, inviting evening speakers, inviting an ILYM Friend to give the Plummer Lecture, organizing workshops and worship-sharing groups, securing kitchen staff to provide meals, preparing the site, planning for the children's program, and organizing any other special events during the week. The yearly meeting's Administrative Coordinator has generally taken responsibility for publicity, registration, coordination of housing, and certain logistics of preparing for the annual sessions.

Much of the daily work during the annual sessions, such as serving food, cleaning common areas, and making sure consumable supplies are replenished, is done by those who sign up for volunteer jobs each day. The ILYM handbook and regularly updated logbooks provide specific details about the tasks of the planning groups and the distribution of work during the sessions.

Continuing the work of the yearly meeting between sessions—Continuing Committee

The Continuing Committee of Illinois Yearly Meeting generally meets once each fall and once each spring to consider the work of Illinois Yearly Meeting between annual sessions. Membership of the Continuing Committee includes all ILYM Friends, who are encouraged to attend its meetings and participate in its business. Effective functioning of the Continuing Committee is best accomplished if those in attendance include at least the officers of the yearly meeting, an appointed representative from each monthly meeting and worship group, representatives from the High School Friends group and the Adult Young Friends group, clerks of all ILYM standing committees and ad hoc committees, and clerks of

constituent regional groups. The yearly meeting clerk presides over the proceedings and the recording clerk prepares minutes. These minutes are included in the minute book of the next yearly meeting and made available to all on the ILYM website.

The main functions of Illinois Yearly Meeting's Continuing Committee are to move forward business that has been initiated by the sense of the business meeting at the previous annual sessions and to prepare new business that will come before the next annual sessions. Continuing Committee hears progress reports from committees working on yearly meeting business and from the planning groups working to prepare for the next annual sessions, allowing committees to respond to one another's work and to coordinate as needed. Committees and monthly meetings are encouraged to bring new business to Continuing Committee, where Friends help to discern whether a particular concern or request for action is ready to come before the yearly meeting as a whole or whether it would benefit from further study or action within a smaller group, such as one of the committees.

On occasion, Continuing Committee may be called upon to take action that would ordinarily occur during the annual sessions. The business meeting at the annual sessions may delegate a decision or action on a particular item of business to the Continuing Committee by approving a minute specifying the decision or action to be taken. In addition, there are some circumstances in which the Continuing Committee may need to take action that has not been anticipated ahead of time, such as dealing with sudden personnel vacancies, emergency repairs to property, and the like.

Handbook

Illinois Yearly Meeting maintains a handbook that provides an up-to-date compilation of policies, procedures, practices and organization of the yearly meeting. The document is under the care of the Handbook Committee which reviews minutes from the annual session for decisions that represent changes to current practice. The

committee may bring the changes to the handbook to the annual session or Continuing Committee to ensure that the revisions have accurately reflected the intent of the minutes or to seek clarification of proposed text.

Faith and Practice

While the ILYM handbook records details of procedures and practices of the yearly meeting that may change with particular circumstances, ILYM's book of Faith and Practice reflects the enduring elements of our faith and our practice that provide the foundation of our identity as Friends, and as Friends of Illinois Yearly Meeting. Changes to it should be undertaken with caution and only after careful discernment. Should Illinois Yearly Meeting decide that revisions are in order, the yearly meeting shall appoint a committee to propose such revisions and bring their recommendations to the yearly meeting for consideration.

Wider Quaker Organizations

Many Quaker organizations provide service beyond the local level, involving Friends from multiple yearly meetings. The organizations listed below are ones with which Illinois Yearly Meeting has a longstanding and important relationship, including financial support and the naming of representatives.

The *American Friends Service Committee* (AFSC) was founded by the Religious Society of Friends in 1917 to promote lasting peace with justice as a practical expression of faith in action. Drawing upon continuing spiritual insights and working with people of many backgrounds, AFSC endeavors to nurture the seeds of change and respect for human life that transform social relations and systems.

The *Friends Committee on National Legislation* (FCNL) lobbies the federal government of the United States to advocate for actions involving peace, justice, equal opportunity, and environmental stewardship. A nonpartisan organization founded in 1943 by the Religious Society of Friends, FCNL seeks to build relationships across political divides in order to promote policies that reflect Quaker values such as peace, integrity, and simplicity.

Friends General Conference (FGC) is an association of yearly meetings and directly affiliated monthly meetings in the United States, Canada, and Mexico, including Illinois Yearly Meeting. FGC, which was founded in 1900 and has expanded considerably since then, sponsors an annual gathering of Friends, nurtures meetings and worship groups, represents Friends at the World Council of Churches, and works to grow and sustain a vital and loving community of Friends based on a shared search for unity in the Spirit.

Friends for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer Concerns (FLGBTQC) is a North American Quaker organization that affirms that of God in all people regardless of sexual orientation and gender identity. Initially organized as a Committee of Concern in 1971, FLGBTQC developed into its current form in the intervening years. Members gather twice a year for worship and fellowship, drawing sustenance from each other and from the Spirit. _

Friends Peace Teams (FPT) develops long-term relationships with communities in conflict around the world, creating programs for peacebuilding, healing, and reconciliation. FPT was founded in the 1990s with the goal of making every Friends Meeting House and Church a center for peacemaking, and builds on extensive Quaker experience in combining practical and spiritual aspects of conflict resolution.

The *Friends World Committee for Consultation* (FWCC), established in 1937, brings together Friends of varying traditions, beliefs, and cultural experiences in order to celebrate their common heritage and express the Quaker message to the world. FWCC sends

representatives to the Quaker United Nations Office (QUNO), represents Friends at international religious gatherings and events, and unites Quakers from all over the world.

Quaker Earthcare Witness (QEW) is a network of people taking action to address the ecological and social crises of the world from a spiritual perspective, one that emphasizes Quaker process and testimonies. Founded in 1987, QEW's primary calling is to facilitate transformation of the human attitudes, values, and worldviews that have resulted in environmental destruction in the modern world.

Queries

The following queries may aid Friends in considering their relations to meeting communities at the various levels, as well as to wider Quaker organizations in which they participate.

For the individual

- * What spiritual gifts do I bring to my meeting communities, including monthly, quarterly and yearly meetings?
- * Do I assume my rightful share in the responsibility of the work of my meetings, including participation in meeting committees?
- * How do I respond to those in the meeting community who have not yet come to value a Quaker testimony or practice that I hold dear?
- * Have I found myself in conflict with others in meeting? Do I approach such conflicts in a spirit of reconciliation? Am I open to giving and receiving forgiveness?
- * Do I visit other Friends meetings?
- * Do I attend quarterly and yearly meeting sessions?

✿ Am I active in the wider world of Friends?

For meetings at all levels

✿ Is our meeting open and welcoming to all?

✿ How are we working to assure that our meeting is free from practices of prejudice?

✿ How do we support members and attenders on their spiritual journeys?

✿ Does our meeting have integrity in all its community relations?

✿ How are our meeting's actions in the world rooted in spiritual discernment?

✿ Does our meeting participate in Quaker events beyond our own meeting?

History of Illinois Yearly Meeting

1833–1875: Before the Yearly Meeting was Formed

The roots of Illinois Yearly Meeting may be traced to the 1830s, when Quaker farmers settled along Clear Creek, near what is now McNabb, Illinois. At that time, this was a frontier area, ceded to the U.S. by the Peoria Nation in 1818 and Kickapoo in 1819, but just outside the disputed region over which the U.S. had recently fought the Sauk and other nations in the Black Hawk War. European-American settlement of the McNabb area began in the 1820s, with the first Quakers arriving about 1833; most of them came from eastern Ohio and western Pennsylvania.

A notable early member of the Clear Creek community was Benjamin Lundy. He had been touring the United States, speaking against slavery and publishing the abolitionist newspaper *The Genius of Universal Emancipation* since 1821. After fellow abolitionist publisher Elijah Lovejoy was killed by a pro-slavery mob in Alton, Illinois in 1837, Lundy resolved to move to Illinois. His own belongings were destroyed by a mob in Philadelphia before he arrived at Clear Creek in 1838, joining his son and daughter who were already there. Unfortunately, he fell ill and died just a few months after arriving; his grave is in the Clear Creek Cemetery.

By 1841 the community had grown enough to request formal establishment of a monthly meeting. The nearest suitable meeting to receive the request was Honey Creek Monthly Meeting, located more than 150 miles to the southeast near Terre Haute, Indiana. Abel Mills describes the journey, made on horseback in midwinter by his father Joseph Mills:

Father started alone. He rode the horse "Dave," one of the two that brother Henry drove to Illinois, a horse well built and with fine spirit. He moved in a canter under the saddle, which was not a hard gait on the rider. On the way, father fell into company with a stranger who was also on horseback. They arrived at the edge of an eight-mile prairie without a dwelling thereon. The day was very cold, which made it necessary for the travelers to ride lively. They passed over the eight miles in forty-five minutes. The stranger's ears were frozen. Father was favored to continue his journey to the end in safety. He attended the meeting at which there was a committee appointed in accordance with the request sent, Father returning safely.

Honey Creek Monthly Meeting responded favorably to the request, forwarding it to Blue River Quarterly Meeting, which approved the establishment of Clear Creek Monthly Meeting in Eleventh Month 1841. Clear Creek Meeting thus became part of Blue River Quarterly Meeting and Ohio Valley Yearly Meeting (known at that time as Indiana Yearly Meeting, though not to be confused with the meeting that now bears that name).

Blue River Quarterly Meeting had itself been established in 1819 and originally consisted of meetings in southern Indiana. The addition of Clear Creek Meeting, far to the west of other monthly meetings, led it to serve as an anchor point and "parent meeting" for other Quaker settlements as these were formed across Illinois. All through the mid-19th century, Illinois meetings were added to Blue River Quarterly and Ohio Valley Yearly Meetings. Simultaneously, some of the older meetings in Indiana began to decline, and Blue River Quarterly gradually came to lie predominately in Illinois.

Further to the west, Quakers were also settling in Iowa. But with no suitable quarterly meeting nearby, and even Blue River Quarterly Meeting too far away to attend, they applied for establishment of monthly meetings to the quarterly meeting most of them had belonged to before coming to Iowa: Fairfax Quarterly Meeting of Baltimore Yearly Meeting. After Fairfax established two monthly meetings in Iowa, it became practical for Iowa Friends to have their

own quarterly meeting, and Prairie Grove Quarterly Meeting was established as part of Baltimore Yearly Meeting in 1863.

The establishment of Prairie Grove Quarterly Meeting caused open friction between Ohio Valley and Baltimore Yearly Meetings. The usual practice to that point had been for new meetings on the western frontier to become part of the westernmost yearly meeting, which would have placed the Iowa meetings in Ohio Valley Yearly Meeting. Ohio Valley sent a letter of complaint to Baltimore, which responded with a report outlining the circumstances which had led to its action. The original minute establishing Ohio Valley Yearly Meeting had described it as “for the states of Indiana, Illinois, and the western part of Ohio,” a description repeated in Ohio Valley’s own discipline. Baltimore therefore regarded Iowa as outside Ohio Valley Yearly Meeting’s territory. Moreover, a pair of Baltimore Friends had attended two sessions of Blue River Quarterly Meeting, and found it in weak condition, and not open to the addition of new meetings in Iowa. Prairie Grove Quarterly Meeting thus continued as part of Baltimore Yearly Meeting, and added a third monthly meeting shortly afterwards.

The Iowa meetings were pioneers of activist Quakerism, thanks in part to the influence of Joseph and Ruth Dugdale. The Dugdales were potentially divisive figures—they had been leaders of the Progressive Friends movement and had played a central role in precipitating schisms in both Ohio Valley and Philadelphia Yearly Meetings, with Joseph serving as first clerk of the separatist Pennsylvania Yearly Meeting. But Friends in Prairie Grove Quarterly accepted them as members and ministers without apparent controversy. The Dugdales were charismatic opponents of the Quietism which had dominated Quakerism for decades; they were leaders in the movements for peace, the abolition of slavery, women’s suffrage, and Native American rights. It was probably due to their leadership that Prairie Grove Quarterly Meeting proposed to Baltimore Yearly Meeting in 1869 that women’s and men’s meetings for business have completely equal disciplinary authority—a proposal which was adopted the following year.

The location of Prairie Grove Quarterly Meeting nearly 800 miles from Baltimore presented an obvious obstacle to Friends who wanted to attend yearly meeting. Even in Blue River Quarterly Meeting, distance was a problem: Ohio Valley Yearly Meeting was held alternately at Richmond, Indiana and Waynesville, Ohio, both a long way from Clear Creek and the other Illinois meetings. Abel Mills describes his father's early attempt to attend yearly meeting, traveling down the Illinois River to the Mississippi, down the Mississippi to the Ohio, up the Ohio to the Little Miami, and up the Little Miami to Waynesville:

The Ohio River was very low. His way was by Cincinnati. They were many times delayed by sandbars. Leaving Cincinnati, he went up the Little Miami bottom, I think, by stage. He reached Corwin, less than a mile from the meetinghouse, with a steep hill to climb. He arrived as the last session of the Yearly Meeting closed. This experience was an exceeding trial to father. The delay on the boat was the cause. The round trip was six or seven hundred miles.

By the 1870s, with two quarterly meetings and multiple monthly meetings well established in Illinois and Iowa, it became practical to contemplate starting a new yearly meeting, to be held at a location close enough to make attendance more practical. Blue River and Prairie Grove Quarterly Meetings joined together in proposing such a meeting in 1873, to be called Illinois Yearly Meeting and held at Clear Creek. Ohio Valley and Baltimore Yearly Meetings both minuted their concurrence with the proposal in 1874. A large new meetinghouse was built about a mile and half east of the original Clear Creek meetinghouse, and Illinois Yearly Meeting held its opening session there the 13th of Ninth Month, 1875.

1875–1890: The New Yearly Meeting

At the time of its establishment, Illinois Yearly Meeting, like most Friends meetings, consisted of three separately sitting bodies: a men's meeting for business, a women's meeting for business, and a meeting of ministers and elders, which included both men and women. The men's and women's meetings met concurrently over a four-day period, on opposite sides of the meetinghouse; sliding dividers were shut to create separate rooms. Occasionally the dividers were opened for joint sessions when reports or other business required the attention of both sexes. The meeting for ministers and elders was held two days prior to the main sessions, with a public meeting for worship on the intervening day. Operations of the yearly meeting were initially guided by the discipline of Ohio Valley Yearly Meeting; Illinois Yearly Meeting adopted its own discipline in 1878.

Between sessions of the yearly meeting, any pressing business was handled by the Representative Committee, consisting of three men Friends and three women Friends appointed by each quarterly meeting, plus 21 Friends of each sex appointed directly by the yearly meeting.

Closely associated with the yearly meeting was the Illinois First Day School Association, which was established at the same time to coordinate religious education efforts. This was nominally an independent organization, but held its sessions in the yearly meeting house in conjunction with the yearly meeting, and published its minutes in the yearly meeting minute books.

Yearly meeting sessions were well-attended. In 1879, many more people were present than the meetinghouse could accommodate, even though there were reported to be enough seats for eight to nine hundred.

Indeed, Quakerism was growing all across the territory covered by Illinois Yearly Meeting. In Chicago, a group known as Central Meeting had been informally organized as early as 1864. After Illinois Yearly Meeting was established, they sought affiliation, and

became part of Blue River Quarterly and Illinois Yearly Meeting in 1879.

Far to the west, Friends who had worked at the Santee Sioux reservation under President Grant's "Quaker Policy" remained in Nebraska after their work was finished, settling near the town of Genoa and starting a meeting there. A second Nebraska meeting was later added at Lincoln. These joined together to form Nebraska Half-Yearly Meeting—the equivalent of a quarterly meeting—as part of Illinois Yearly Meeting in 1889.

Several additional meetings were added, and although there were a few closures as well, the initial period of Illinois Yearly Meeting's existence was one which Friends would later look back on as vibrant. The yearly meeting now covered an enormous area stretching from Salem, Indiana in the southeast to Genoa, Nebraska in the northwest: a distance of 645 miles.

The prevailing religious stance in Illinois Yearly Meeting during this period appears to have been a simple, undocinaire Christianity, with a heavy emphasis on "practical righteousness"—doing good in the world. A statement published with the 1885 minutes typifies this attitude: "We have no doctrinal creed; our religion is simple and practical, based upon love to God, which is evinced by loving all of our fellow beings."

Efforts to improve society were a central concern of the yearly meeting, and the importance of coordinating such work was stressed especially by Jonathan Plummer, who served as clerk of the men's meeting through its first nine years. Following Plummer's suggestion in 1878, Illinois Yearly Meeting invited the other six Hicksite yearly meetings to hold a "general conference" at least once every five years, in order to "co-operate in labor, and increase our influence upon the various questions involving our testimonies." A preliminary meeting was held in 1881, and the conference was formally organized the following year as the Friends Union for Philanthropic Labor. This organization formed the nucleus for the more broadly focused

Friends General Conference established in 1900—now one of the main umbrella organizations for North American Quakerism.

A major improvement to the yearly meeting campus was made in 1885, with the construction of a dining hall. By serving meals on site, the yearly meeting could more practically hold morning and afternoon sessions on the same day.

In 1887, a significant change in practice was adopted: the men's and women's business meetings were combined, and all business was conducted in joint session from that point forward. For the next 41 years, the combined meeting regularly appointed a man as clerk and a woman as assistant clerk, until Luella Flitcraft was appointed as first female clerk of the joint meeting in 1928.

1891–1941: Modernization and Numerical Decline

As Illinois Yearly Meeting approached the 20th century, it was looking toward continued growth and expansion. A committee was appointed in 1896 to explore the possibility of starting new Quaker settlements in the far west. Over the course of three years, the committee visited and reported on several sites in Utah, Idaho, Oregon, New Mexico, and west Texas. But far from expanding, the yearly meeting was actually entering a long period of contraction and loss of numerical strength.

Several of Illinois Yearly Meeting's smaller meetings fell inactive in the 1890s as their participants aged or moved away. The pace of closures accelerated, and soon, even previously large and robust meetings were closing in quick succession. Nebraska Half-Yearly was laid down in 1912, and by 1930, all the meetings in Prairie Grove Quarterly were inactive. Blue River Quarterly survived, but in severely reduced form. Illinois Yearly Meeting now consisted for practical purposes of just three meetings: Clear Creek Meeting near McNabb, Central Meeting in Chicago, and Highland Creek Meeting

near Salem, Indiana—and Highland Creek was holding meetings for worship only irregularly. In the 1890s, the yearly meeting had peaked at more than 1200 members, and its constituent meetings reported an average combined weekly attendance reaching over 500. The reports for 1927 and 1928 show a membership of 490 and an average combined weekly attendance of just 38 people for the entire yearly meeting.

Several new meetings were organized in cities and college towns in the region during this era: in Madison, Wisconsin; Urbana-Champaign, Illinois; and Saint Louis, Missouri. However, these meetings were initially established on an independent basis, rather than in affiliation with Illinois Yearly Meeting. They all later affiliated, but had substantial histories as independent meetings before they did so.

In the Hyde Park neighborhood near the University of Chicago campus, a group of Friends who were affiliated with Western Yearly Meeting began meeting for worship about 1921. This group showed special interest in reconciliation among the divided branches of the Religious Society of Friends, and invited Central Meeting to join with them in forming a new monthly meeting. Central Meeting accepted the invitation, and the two groups merged together as Fifty-Seventh Street Monthly Meeting in 1931. Fifty-Seventh Street Meeting affiliated simultaneously with Illinois Yearly Meeting and with Western Yearly Meeting—one of the first dually affiliated meetings anywhere.

Central Meeting had traditionally hosted one of the four annual sessions of Blue River Quarterly Meeting. Fifty-Seventh Street Meeting now took on this responsibility—and was also responsible for hosting one of the four sessions of Chicago Quarterly Meeting of Western Yearly Meeting. This dual responsibility presented an opportunity for further reconciliation, and in 1939, the two quarterly meetings began holding one session per year together.

The first several decades of the twentieth century were a time not just of reconciliation among Friends, but also of changes and

modernization in Quaker practice, and Illinois Yearly Meeting was no exception. At the turn of the century, meeting discipline—though markedly relaxed compared to a hundred years earlier—still called for the appointment of overseers whose responsibility was to initiate disownment proceedings against Friends who were guilty of unrepentant immorality or rule violations. Regular queries, to which meetings were expected to provide written answers, included questions about how members dressed, and whether their personal finances were in order. Meetinghouses included a ministers' gallery, and meetings officially recognized specific individuals as ministers or elders. "Plain speech," using the pronoun thee and its related forms, was still widely used. All this disappeared over the course of a few decades.

During this period, Illinois Yearly Meeting found its 1878 book of discipline to be increasingly outdated. ILYM joined with the other six yearly meetings then constituting Friends General Conference (FGC) to produce a uniform book of discipline, which it adopted in 1927. By this time, it had become unusual for meetings in ILYM to record a Friend as a minister. Adoption of the FGC uniform discipline brought an official end to the recording of ministers and elders, and replaced the ministers and elders meetings at all levels with ministry and counsel committees. The facing benches in the yearly meeting house were taken down, and the risers covered over with a platform in 1930. The role of overseers was reconceptualized to coordinating pastoral care. Disownments— already rare by the turn of the century—virtually ceased.

Illinois Yearly Meeting dropped its expectation of written query responses in 1928, moving entirely to unminuted oral responses instead. In 1936, consideration of queries during the ILYM business sessions was discontinued entirely. However, the new discipline had replaced the old queries for the ministers and elders meetings with free-form reports from the ministry and counsel committees. These reports came to function as general State of Society Reports, and effectively replaced the old queries as the yearly meeting's primary

method for receiving information about the condition of its constituent meetings.

In 1906, the yearly meeting established a committee “for the advancement of Friends principles”—understood primarily as promoting vitality and life in ILYM constituent meetings. In 1912, the opportunity presented itself of hiring a “field secretary” jointly with Ohio Valley Yearly Meeting, for the purpose of “holding conferences, starting study circles and awakening interest among the younger people in the mission of their society.” The field secretary position later received extensive support and involvement from Friends General Conference in addition to the two yearly meetings. Illinois Yearly Meeting discontinued its field secretary program in 1950, but revived it in 1991. Since then, the position of field secretary has been an ILYM-internal position.

In 1919–1920 the Representative Committee (corresponding to our current Continuing Committee) was renamed the Executive Committee, and was reorganized so that all of its members were appointed directly by the yearly meeting, rather than some by the yearly and some by the quarterly meetings as before. The requirement that it include equal numbers of both sexes was dropped at that time. In 1923, the yearly meeting began appointing a “minute clerk”—what we now call a recording clerk. Previously, the recording of minutes had been the responsibility of the presiding clerk.

This era also saw changes in the way religious education was handled, and in the children’s activities at the yearly meeting sessions. The Illinois First Day School Association laid itself down in 1917; its responsibilities passed to the First Day School Committee of the yearly meeting, which later evolved to the current Children’s Religious Education Committee. There was a modest children’s program at the annual sessions starting in 1888; by 1927 there was a full-scale “Junior Yearly Meeting” with clerks, minutes, and epistles.

1942–1975: Re-expansion and Reconfiguration

A most dramatic event occurred when requests were heard [in late 1942] from two meetings to affiliate with Blue River Quarterly and Illinois Yearly Meetings. These requests from Peoria and Oak Park literally overwhelmed Friends. Expressions of pleasure and appreciation were followed by a long and deep silence, then comments took a humorous turn and someone said “We have just witnessed the birth of twins in the Society, and an even greater miracle, the twins were born more than a hundred miles apart.”

ILYM Advancement Committee Report, 1943

The addition of Peoria and Oak Park Meetings to Illinois Yearly Meeting marked the end of ILYM’s long period of numerical decline, and the beginning of a new era of expansion and rejuvenation. In the space of a few years, Illinois Yearly Meeting returned from the brink of extinction to become a large and robust organization, as new meetings were formed and existing independent meetings sought affiliation. By 1975, ILYM was sizeable enough that a portion of it was set off as a new, separate yearly meeting.

The previously independent monthly meetings in Madison, St. Louis, and Urbana-Champaign affiliated with Illinois Yearly Meeting in the mid-1940s to early 1950s. Monthly meetings were also established in Milwaukee, Minneapolis, and Downers Grove; and preparative meetings at several additional locations.

It soon became practical to have two quarterly meetings again, and in 1952, the northern part of the yearly meeting was organized into Fox Valley Quarterly Meeting, with the southern part remaining as Blue River Quarterly Meeting. Fox Valley Quarterly included Fifty-Seventh Street Meeting, and therefore took over Blue River Quarterly’s previous pattern of holding one session each year jointly with Chicago Quarterly Meeting of Western Yearly Meeting; this increased to two sessions in 1956.

As yearly meeting sessions became more heavily attended, the facilities required updating. In 1949, a basement was excavated under the west side of the meetinghouse for a new kitchen and dining room. The old dining hall was converted to dormitory and educational space as the “Junior Yearly Meeting House.”

Traditionally, members of Clear Creek Meeting had provided accommodation in their own homes for almost all Friends attending the yearly meeting sessions; but this became impractical, and many Friends began to camp on the yearly meeting grounds, or sleep in cots in the meetinghouse. It was clear that the existing facilities were inadequate, and Illinois Yearly Meeting moved its 1958 and 1959 sessions to Camp Wakanda, near Middleton, Wisconsin. In 1960 a dormitory was built next to the meetinghouse, allowing the yearly meeting to return to the McNabb campus. A lot across the road from the meetinghouse was purchased for use as a campground in 1969, and a showerhouse erected in 1975.

In 1960, the ILYM meetings in Wisconsin and Minnesota were organized into Northern Half-Yearly Meeting, the equivalent of a quarterly meeting. This left Fox Valley Quarterly as consisting just of dually affiliated meetings. Fox Valley Quarterly began to hold all of its sessions jointly with Chicago Quarterly Meeting of Western Yearly Meeting; a single set of officers served both quarterly meetings.

In 1962, Lake Forest Monthly Meeting, which had been organized ten years earlier as an independent meeting, requested affiliation with Illinois Yearly Meeting on the condition that it not be required to join either Chicago-area quarterly meeting until such time as they were to unite. Although the two quarterlies were meeting jointly, they had not formally merged; so Lake Forest was accorded direct affiliation with ILYM—the first monthly meeting to affiliate with the yearly meeting without belonging to one of its quarterly meetings.

The two quarterly meetings did finally combine to form Metropolitan Chicago General Meeting (MCGM) in 1970. But since MCGM included meetings which were not affiliated with both Illinois Yearly Meeting and Western Yearly Meeting, it did not fully function as a

quarterly meeting of either yearly meeting. Rather, it met “for sharing, worship and concerns, with a de-emphasizing of business, except as the business of Friends is their concern with the social health of the World.” MCGM was laid down in 2013.

The Viet Nam era saw a flurry of new meetings: Decatur, Columbia, Northside, Springfield, DeKalb, Friends Hill, Thorn Creek, and Oshkosh Monthly Meetings, as well as numerous smaller preparative or allowed meetings. Evanston Monthly Meeting, which had been in existence since 1936 as part of Western Yearly Meeting, joined Illinois Yearly Meeting as a dual affiliate in 1972.

Northern Half-Yearly Meeting now included a large number of meetings across a broad region. Many of them were small and distant from the McNabb campus where Illinois Yearly Meeting held its sessions. Twin Cities Meeting in Minneapolis withdrew from ILYM in 1971 in order to pursue the idea of organizing a new yearly meeting to serve the Wisconsin-Minnesota area. This idea gained the support of other meetings; and in 1975, with the cooperation of ILYM, Northern Half-Yearly Meeting separated and reorganized itself as Northern Yearly Meeting.

All through the period of 1942–1975, much of the yearly meeting’s attention was taken up with responding to war. During World War II, the yearly meeting maintained a Civilian Public Service Committee, to support Friends engaged in alternative service. During the Viet Nam war, Illinois Yearly Meeting made a point of sending humanitarian supplies to all sides in the conflict, and many of its local meetings provided draft counseling and engaged in public protest. Many ILYM Friends were also involved in the Civil Rights Movement during this period, and in efforts to oppose racism more generally. The final years of this era were also marked by greater awareness of, and sensitivity to, issues pertaining to sexuality and gender identity. Workshops on sexual roles, mores and relationships were held at the annual sessions in 1970 and 1971, setting a process into motion which resulted in a 1974 ILYM minute opposing discrimination against homosexuals; stating that relationships

should be judged on the degree to which they contribute to the growth of love, rather than on the basis of conventionality; and calling on Friends to examine their assumptions about sexuality.

This period also marked another change in Illinois Yearly Meeting's book of discipline, or Faith and Practice, as such books were increasingly titled. After the 1927 FGC uniform discipline went out of print, ILYM adopted the 1955 edition of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting's Faith and Practice as a "temporary measure." This "temporary measure" of using Philadelphia's Faith and Practice turned out to last for more than 60 years.

In 1965, a major reorganization of the yearly meeting was adopted and outlined in the first ILYM Handbook. The Executive Committee was replaced by the Continuing Committee, with members appointed by the monthly meetings rather than the yearly meeting, together with the clerks of standing committees, and the clerk of the yearly meeting.

A trend which had begun earlier, but noticeably accelerated in this period, was a reduction in the role of quarterly meetings.

Traditionally, these had formed a systematic intervening level between the monthly meetings and the yearly meeting; but over time, most of the functions of quarterly meetings were taken over either by the yearly meeting or by the monthly meetings. When Northern Half-Yearly Meeting separated from Illinois Yearly Meeting to become Northern Yearly Meeting in 1975, Blue River Quarterly Meeting was left as the only quarterly meeting in Illinois Yearly Meeting.

1976–2019: Recent Developments

From 1976 until the time of this writing, the size and geographic extent of Illinois Yearly Meeting remained roughly the same, but its component meetings experienced varying degrees of growth and

contraction. New meetings affiliated, while others disaffiliated or were laid down. Monthly meetings added in this period include three in Illinois: Southern Illinois Meeting in Carbondale, Bloomington-Normal Meeting, and Fox Valley Meeting in McHenry County; and two in Indiana: Duneland Meeting in Valparaiso and South Bend Meeting. Several monthly meetings were laid down: Springfield, Decatur, Thorn Creek, and DeKalb—though Springfield Meeting continues as a worship group under the care of Urbana-Champaign. All through this period new worship groups and preparative meetings were formed. Many of these were short-lived, but several remain as valued parts of Illinois Yearly Meeting. Especially during the 1980s and 1990s, it was common for worship groups to participate in the life of ILYM without formally affiliating.

Issues of reproduction, sexuality and gender were a recurrent concern throughout this period. Friends labored for several years over the question of abortion before uniting on a minute supporting abortion rights in 1992. A 1980 proposal to send an official ILYM representative to Friends for Lesbian and Gay Concerns (FLGC, now FLGBTQC) was approved in 1992. In 1995, a minute from FLGC urged meeting support for the legalization of same-sex marriage. Illinois Yearly Meeting did not come to unity on this issue, but Friends Hill Monthly Meeting was uncomfortable with the degree of support for same-sex marriage in the yearly meeting, as evidenced in part by the fact that several monthly meetings in ILYM had previously taken same-sex marriages under their care. Friends Hill withdrew from ILYM in 1997, citing that issue and a perceived anti-Christian attitude among ILYM Friends as reasons.

Several changes in ILYM's committees and organizational structure took place during this period. In 1982, the Advancement Committee and the Ministry and Counsel Committee were merged to form the Ministry and Advancement Committee. The Handbook Committee was set up in 1983, and the Youth Oversight Committee in 1984. An ad hoc Environmental Concerns Committee was set up in 1987; it was made a standing committee three years later. The Peace

Resources Committee was established in 2002, along with the Development Committee.

In 1989, the yearly meeting set up a Peace Tax Fund, into which Friends could redirect a portion of their federal income taxes, if conscience did not permit them to help pay for war. In 1995, the yearly meeting established the Quaker Volunteer Service, Witness and Training Committee, to coordinate and promote volunteer service opportunities, such as the work camps which in an earlier era had been organized by the American Friends Service Committee. This committee lasted until 2010, at which time it was noted that many of its goals had been met with the establishment of national organizations for coordinating such service.

The yearly meeting approved hiring an Administrative Coordinator in 2000, a Youth Coordinator in 2007, and a Children's Religious Education Coordinator in 2016. Now with multiple paid staff positions, the yearly meeting established a Personnel Committee in 2009.

In 2004, Illinois Yearly Meeting was incorporated; previously it had been legally organized as a trust. The role of the trustees was taken over by the stewards after the trust was dissolved two years later.

This era also saw substantial changes to the ILYM campus. In 2000, the yearly meeting acquired a one-acre plot of land to the immediate west of the meetinghouse. The next year, an ad hoc Site Envisioning and Building Committee was set up, and began developing plans for new buildings, guided by a vision of expanded ILYM facilities as a "Peace House on the Prairie"—a regional peacemaking and retreat center. In 2005, in order to make room for planned new buildings, the dormitory was dismantled and the Junior Yearly Meeting House was moved across the road to the campground. Materials from the dormitory were reused to construct a set of cabins, also on the campground. However, the plans for new buildings were altered in 2009, when the opportunity presented itself for ILYM to buy the existing house, outbuildings and lot just west of the meetinghouse. The house was renamed the Clear Creek House of Illinois Yearly

Meeting, and renovated to provide additional dormitory space, as well as much-needed winter meeting space and kitchen facilities for Clear Creek Meeting.

Concurrently with these changes it was becoming increasingly clear that official reliance on the 1955 Philadelphia Yearly Meeting Faith and Practice was no longer serving the yearly meeting well. Illinois Yearly Meeting embarked on the project of producing its own Faith and Practice in 1992. After a long period of study and research, the first sections of new text were proposed to the yearly meeting in 2003. Each subsequent section was composed initially by the Faith and Practice Committee, and revised—usually multiple times—before being distributed to the wider yearly meeting community for feedback. Almost all sections were presented and discussed in workshops, during yearly meeting gatherings and/or at local meetings and worship groups. After being revised in response to feedback received, each section was submitted separately to a yearly meeting business session, at which time it was read aloud before the body. In some cases, additional changes were requested. Each section was approved by the yearly meeting for a provisional period ranging from one to five years. Additional feedback was received and additional revisions made during these provisional periods; each section was then approved for an indefinite period as its provisional period expired. At the conclusion of this lengthy process, the Faith and Practice Committee reviewed the entire document and then presented it to the yearly meeting for final approval, which was granted in 2019.

Appendix 1: Sample Membership Record

The following form may be used for keeping the membership records of a monthly meeting. This form is intended only as a sample; meetings should feel free to alter it or design their own forms, according to their needs.

Some meetings may not recognize all the categories of membership mentioned on the form, such as birthright membership and associate membership.

Some information included on the form, such as data about members' families, may be useful but not strictly necessary for meetings to record. Meetings are urged to consider carefully what information to gather, and how much of this information they will regard as optional.

Meetings may receive requests for information in their records, from individuals researching their family histories or for other reasons. Clear policies should be adopted about when such information may be shared. These policies should be made clear to new members as they provide their data for the records.

Membership Record

Record number: _____ Record closed

Name: _____

Previous name(s): _____

Contact Information

Address: _____

Telephone number(s): _____

E-mail address(es): _____

Admission Data

Date of Admission: _____

- by birth or adoption
- by application
- by transfer from _____

Membership Type: full

- associate, expires on _____

Termination Data

Date of Termination: _____

- by death
- by release
- by transfer to _____

Remarks:

Personal and Family Data

Birthdate: _____

Place of birth: _____

Father's Name: _____

Birthdate: _____ Location: _____

Is/was a member?

Mother's Name: _____

Birthdate: _____ Location: _____

Is/was a member?

Marriage 1 to: _____

Date: _____ Location: _____

Is/was a member?

Marriage 2 to: _____

Date: _____ Location: _____

Is/was a member?

Marriage 3 to: _____

Date: _____ Location: _____

Is/was a member?

Child/Stepchild 1 : _____

Date: _____ Location: _____

Is/was a member?

Child/Stepchild 2 : _____

Date: _____ Location: _____

Is/was a member?

Child/Stepchild 3 : _____

Date: _____ Location: _____

Is/was a member?

Child/Stepchild 4 : _____

Date: _____ Location: _____

Is/was a member?

Child/Stepchild 5 : _____

Date: _____ Location: _____

Is/was a member?

Appendix 2: Sample Certificate of Transfer and Acceptance of Transfer

Certificate of Transfer

To _____ Monthly Meeting of Friends

Dear Friends,

_____, a member(s) of our monthly meeting having moved with their minor children

_____, have requested a transfer of membership to your meeting. Consideration has been given to this request and there appears to be no obstruction to granting the request. We therefore, recommend

_____ to your loving care and remain in love, your friends.

Signed on behalf of _____ Monthly Meeting of Friends, held at _____ on _____ (date).

Signature of clerk

Acceptance of Transfer

To _____ Monthly Meeting of Friends

Dear Friends:

We have received your Certificate of Transfer dated
_____ and have accepted
_____ into membership with us.

Signed on behalf of _____ Monthly Meeting
of Friends, held at _____ on
_____ (date).

Signature of clerk

Appendix 3: Sample Traveling Minutes

Sample 1

Date

Dear Friends,

Loving greetings from Friends at _____ Monthly Meeting in _____ Yearly Meeting. Our member _____ will be traveling in the ministry this next year under a concern for _____.

[share something about this Friend as it relates to committee work or representation from monthly or yearly meetings to yearly meetings or national Quaker organizations.]

Our meeting has worshipped with _____ as we considered this issue and have no doubt that he/she is genuinely called to be with you and seek new Light with you about God's intentions for

After careful consideration the meeting has found unity to approve this minute of travel.

We entrust _____ to your care and pray that you and _____ feel the presence of the Light as you meet together.

Signature of clerk

Sample 2

Date

Dear Friends,

_____, a member of our meeting, has shared with the meeting her/his leading to travel in the ministry this year among meetings which are seeking to

_____.

After careful consideration the meeting has found unity to approve this minute of travel.

We entrust _____ to your care and pray that you and _____ feel the presence of the Light as you meet together.

Signature of clerk

Elements of Endorsements on Returned Letters of Travel

Following a visit, the clerk of the visited meeting writes an endorsement to the sending meeting. Endorsements on returned

letters of travel may speak to the work being done under Divine guidance and/or the ways the spiritual work of the Friend has benefited the meeting being visited.

Appendix 4: Memorial Meeting Preparation Checklist

Things to Do in Preparing for a Memorial

The death of a beloved member or attender can be a trying time for a Friends meeting. Ideally, the meeting community will unite in love and mutual support. Knowing in advance what steps are needed to assist the bereaved and prepare for a memorial service can help foster such unity. With this in mind, the Ministry and Advancement Committee of Illinois Yearly Meeting has prepared this brief account of matters to consider following the death of a member, attender, or loved one related to the meeting community.

It should be clear in advance which meeting committee is responsible for memorial preparation. That committee needs to take action as soon as possible after notification of a death, beginning with the appointment of a contact person to take on various responsibilities and to communicate with the proper parties. Designating a contact person, and clarifying this within the committee and with the family of the deceased, will help avoid ambiguities, duplication of effort, mis-communications, and missed steps—all of which can lead to problems at a time when those involved are least able to handle them well.

While many of the matters listed below should be undertaken by the meeting, some are typically handled by a funeral home — often selected from an elaborate à la carte menu, for a fee that quickly adds up. Having the meeting's committee and contact person acting on behalf of the family can be an important statement of Friends' testimony on simplicity, and can result in significant savings, both material and emotional, to the bereaved.

The following are among the items that should be considered following a death in the meeting family:

1. Ministering to the family of the deceased. The period immediately following the death of a loved one invariably involves grief, and Friends dealing with the family need to be sensitive to that fact. Anyone serving in this role needs to be a listener as much as a dispenser of information. They need to be prepared to address a number of sensitive issues, including what to do with the body (burial, cremation, etc.) and whether any assistance is needed in matters of this sort. While preparation for the memorial service needs to proceed apace, planning for it cannot outweigh consideration for the family of the deceased. Planning the service is part of our ministry to the family of the deceased, not merely done for the convenience of the meeting.
2. Obituary/death notice. While this is separate from the memorial minute (see below), it is an important matter to consider. It's right to inquire of the family as to its progress, or even to find someone else to take it on, if the family is unable to do so. We owe it to the larger public simply to let people know that the person in question has died. If necessary, someone can work with the family in drafting the notice. This will entail knowing the local standards for submission (word counts, pictures, deadlines, costs, etc.). Such standards can usually be obtained with a phone call or on-line and should go into the appropriate committee's files for future reference.
3. Memorial minute. Monthly meetings are expected to prepare a memorial minute to forward to the yearly meeting for presentation at the annual sessions. It should be decided as soon after the death as possible who will write this on behalf of the meeting. While the memorial minute bears some similarity to the obituary/death notice, it differs in that it need not be composed as quickly and is intended for Friends rather than for the general public. Information the departed person might have

provided, particularly with respect to their Quaker activities, can be helpful in preparing this, as can the obituary itself.

4. Arrangements for a venue other than the meetinghouse.
Consideration of the memorial service should begin by assessing the likelihood of attenders filling or overflowing the space the meeting has to offer. Most alternative locations will either charge a fee or expect a contribution. Regardless of the space selected for the memorial service, the following matters need to be clarified in advance: access to a kitchen; availability of tables, chairs, and serving ware; who sets up, takes down, and cleans up; proper parking space for family and guests; etc. Nothing should be taken for granted.
5. Getting the word out. There are at least three groups who need to know about the memorial meeting: family and friends, the meeting community, and the local community. The obituary may serve the last group, and a meeting email list may cover the meeting community. The meeting should offer help to the family in notifying far-flung friends and family, particularly if the deceased was alone or local survivors are elderly. Friends and family should be given notice before a general announcement is made concerning the memorial service. Printing up a postcard with information on the memorial on one side is one easy way to get word out to a large number of people quickly.
6. Overnight hospitality. If there are people coming to the memorial service from out of town, it is very helpful to offer hospitality. The meeting should let the family know who will coordinate hospitality. If there will not be enough sleeping space in homes, it may be possible to arrange a group rate at a local motel.
7. Participation by family. Don't forget the young people! While some children will be able to sit through the memorial service, it may be necessary to provide childcare, especially for the younger ones. Be sure that parents know about this when they arrive and that they can bring their children to the childcare site at any time during the memorial.

8. Flowers. These are usually part of the memorial—whether available in and around the worship space, or on a separate table—and can be very simple (from people’s gardens) or more elaborate arrangements obtained from a florist. Check with the family on their preferences. Family members may have had floral tributes sent to a funeral home that they can bring (or allow someone else to pick up) and which can be added to the service. Choosing where these go after the service should be part of the planning.
9. Displays. Often, a meaningful part of a funeral, memorial, or visitation is a space where photographs, awards/citations/certificates, and personal mementos can be shown and appreciated, as people are arriving, after the service itself, or both. Accumulating and deciding on a mode of display for such mementos—possibly including electronic projection—can be a meaningful way that a family member can contribute, but it shouldn’t be expected of them. Make advance arrangements so that tables or easels are available.
10. Memorial handout. This is completely optional, but it is something that families often choose to have available. Even though Friends’ worship is unprogrammed, the order of service can be outlined, with names and functions of those agreeing to participate in particular roles. If a flyer is handed to those coming in, this may include the obituary and/or the memorial minute. Organizing and producing this requires planning— there are a number of elements going into it, and clear responsibility should be assigned. Check with the family regarding inclusion of a photo or other graphics, as well as paper stock, color, etc. Allow enough time for compiling, laying out, duplicating, and arranging for people to hand out copies at the doors.
11. Some other possible considerations in planning for the memorial service:
 - ✿ Traffic controllers to direct cars in parking.

- ✿ A greeter(s) to welcome people at the door, pointing out the guest book if there is one, and handing out the memorial flyer if there is one.
- ✿ At least one basket for condolence cards.
- ✿ Ushers to seat people, especially latecomers.
- ✿ A microphone runner if needed.
- ✿ A musical offering, before, during, or at the end of the worship, at the family's discretion.
- ✿ Advance designation of someone to read the obituary or memorial minute, if this will be done during the memorial service.
- ✿ Information about any organizations designated as recipients of memorial contributions. It isn't necessary to have the addresses—just the name that should go on a check, and then have the committee take charge of mailing them in.

12. Opening and closing worship. Prior to the service, make sure that someone (often the clerk of the meeting or a family member) is designated to open the service with a brief explanation of a Quaker memorial, including how the hour will proceed, how the conclusion will be signaled, and where refreshments/visitation will take place. Attenders should be told about the nature of Quaker worship and encouraged to offer ministry in as spirit-led a manner as possible, keeping in mind that some attenders are unlikely to have ever set foot in a Quaker meeting house before this service. An example of an initial announcement is given below. It is also helpful if this information is provided in written form to people as they enter. The person who makes the initial announcement should also conclude the worship service.

13. Refreshments. This is an important opportunity for people to continue the memorial process after the conclusion of the service. Refreshments can consist of finger foods, a light meal, a potluck, or whatever suits the needs of the family. A food coordinator, perhaps a member of the meeting's hospitality committee, should take charge of this well in advance of the date of the service.
14. Death certificate. Be sure to get multiple certified copies of the death certificate, both for claiming survivor and insurance benefits and for those who have traveled from a distance and can claim a bereavement fare.

The needs of the family of the deceased will continue after the memorial service. Friends will need to be especially sensitive to how much those who are grieving need continuing support, and how much they wish to be left alone. Friends' experience shows that a well-handled and well-attended memorial service can be a very important step in the process of consoling the bereaved and bonding the meeting community.

A Sample Introduction for a Quaker Memorial Service

Quakers gather for worship in silent expectation. We believe that in the silence all people can experience God directly. We have no pastor, no altar, no sermon, and no choir. Any ministry that occurs comes from those in attendance, including you, who feel led to speak or share a song or a reading.

Today, we encourage you to share any thoughts or stories you have about [name] that are especially meaningful to you. It is helpful if you stand to speak so that others can hear you better. Please leave a

few moments between messages so that all have the opportunity to reflect on the previous message.

The memorial service will last approximately an hour, or until all who wish to speak have had a chance to do so. Meeting will be closed with a handshake. There will be an opportunity for informal visitation afterwards [specify location and whether there will be food].

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Glossary

Acknowledged minister: A recorded minister.

Advancement: Promoting the vitality of Friends meetings or of the Quaker movement generally, including both internal community-building efforts and outreach to the broader public.

Advices: Words of advice, issued by a meeting to its constituent meetings or individual members, often in connection with queries.

Affirm: To indicate that one's statements are true, particularly when such an indication is legally required, as when giving testimony in court. Friends generally affirm rather than swear, in accordance with Jesus' injunction to "swear not at all" (Matthew 5:34) and to avoid the implication that lies are more acceptable if not sworn to.

After the manner of Friends: Done in harmony with Quaker principles; following Quaker practice.

AFSC (American Friends Service Committee): a Quaker organization devoted to service, development, and peace programs throughout the world.

Allowed meeting: A recognized meeting.

Associate membership: A form of membership accorded in some meetings to children, differing from ordinary membership in that it expires at a certain age, normally in early adulthood.

As way opens: If and when a group or individual is spiritually prepared for a particular course of action and an opportunity for that action presents itself.

Attender: A person who regularly attends a Friends meeting without being a member of it.

Beanite: A Friend or meeting belonging to the tradition of Joel and Hannah Bean, 19th century ministers who founded San Jose Meeting in California. Beanite meetings are typically unprogrammed, liberal, independent of other Quaker organizations, and located in the western U.S.

Birthright Friend: A Friend whose membership was initiated at birth or adoption, by virtue of the parents already being members; or more loosely, anyone who was raised since early childhood in a Quaker setting. Used in contrast to convinced Friend.

Birthright membership: Membership in a Friends meeting which is extended automatically to children whose parents are members at the time of birth or adoption. Many meetings no longer grant birthright membership, but it was traditional to do so.

Break meeting: To end a meeting for worship, traditionally by shaking hands.

Called meeting: An “extra” meeting, in addition to those held according to the regular schedule, typically to deal with an urgent question which cannot wait for the regular business meeting.

Center down: To quiet one’s mind and settle into worship, so that one is open to the leadings of the Spirit.

Children of the Light: An early name for the Quakers.

Christ Within: The Spirit of Christ, as manifest within each person; the Spirit or Light Within.

Clearness: 1. Confidence that a decision or action is in accord with Divine will, as revealed by the Light Within. 2. Freedom from burdens, constraints or obstacles, particularly of a spiritual nature.

Clearness committee: A committee set up to assist an individual or group in seeking clearness about a decision or concern. Such committees are appointed for couples requesting marriage under the care of a meeting, and for individuals requesting membership in a meeting; they may also be organized at an individual’s request

to aid in personal discernment about matters not requiring a meeting decision.

Clerk: An individual appointed by a business meeting to discern when the meeting has reached its decisions, and articulate those decisions back to the meeting for its approval. The clerk also recognizes speakers in meeting for business, signs letters and other documents on behalf of the meeting, and may have other responsibilities as the meeting assigns.

Concern: A deeply felt and spiritually-based sense that some matter requires attention.

Congregational Friends: Progressive Friends.

Conscientious objector: An individual who refuses to participate in military or other activity, on the grounds that their conscience will not permit it.

Conservative meeting: A meeting belonging to the tradition of those Orthodox Friends who resisted certain aspects of 19th century evangelicalism. Conservative meetings are typically unprogrammed, but more traditionalist and explicitly Christian than many other unprogrammed meetings.

Continuing revelation: The belief that God continues to guide and inform people through the Light Within, as opposed to the idea that God's revelation was completed at some point in the past, such as with the composition of the most recent parts of the Bible.

Convinced Friend: A Friend who became a member by request, after having become convinced of the religious Truth advanced by Friends, as opposed to a birthright Friend.

Convincement: An inner conviction of the religious Truth advanced by Friends, especially as a reason for initiating membership in a Friends meeting.

Covered meeting: A gathered meeting.

Discernment: Spiritual labor to discover Divine will, especially through individual or corporate worship, in order to distinguish authentic leadings from other motivations which do not arise from the Spirit; or the outcome of such labor.

Discipline: 1. The procedures and policies by which a Friends meeting operates, including official expectations for members and constituent meetings. 2. A book outlining these policies, procedures and expectations, typically issued by a yearly meeting. Many yearly meetings have replaced their books of discipline with books entitled Faith and Practice, such as this one.

Disown: To issue a statement (by a meeting) that a particular individual is out of fellowship with Friends; to terminate a Friend's membership for cause. Disownment is now very rare. The primary purpose of disownment is to clarify to the public that the disowned Friend's actions are not to be regarded as those of a Friend or taken as representative of the meeting. Disownment does not cut all ties with the individual, who normally may continue participation in meeting activities which are open to the public.

EFCI (Evangelical Friends Church International): an organization of evangelical Friends meetings throughout the world.

Elder (noun): 1. An experienced and respected Friend, especially one who exercises leadership in a meeting. 2. A Friend appointed to exercise special care toward the ministers and potential ministers of a meeting, fostering the development of their gifts, encouraging whatever in their ministry seems a faithful expression of the Spirit's guidance, and tenderly offering correction when ministry seems inappropriate or misguided.

Elder (verb): 1. To act as an elder. 2. To criticize or reprimand as inappropriate or un-Quakerly.

Epistle: A letter, especially a formal letter conveying a spiritual or religious message. By tradition, each Friends yearly meeting

issues an epistle to other yearly meetings annually.

Evangelical meeting: 1. A Friends meeting incorporating major features of evangelical Protestantism, such as a strong emphasis on salvation through faith, and reliance on the Bible as a source of religious doctrine. Evangelical meetings are typically pastoral and programmed. 2. A meeting affiliated with EFCI.

Exercises: The proceedings or transactions of a meeting; or more generally the course of activity in a Quaker gathering, whether part of a business meeting or not. Traditionally, yearly meetings issue an annual “report of exercises” summarizing the major decisions, issues considered, ministry offered, and memorable events at that year’s gathering.

Expectant worship: Waiting worship.

Facing benches: Benches at the front of a traditionally arranged Friends’ meeting room, facing the main body of the meeting and usually arranged on a raised gallery. Seating on the facing benches was originally intended primarily for ministers, so that they might be heard more easily when speaking; but came to include elders, clerks, and other meeting officials.

FCNL (Friends Committee on National Legislation): a U.S. Quaker lobbying organization working “to create a world free from war, a society with equity and justice for all, a community where every person’s potential may be fulfilled and an earth restored.”

Feel a stop: To sense that some contemplated decision or course of action should not go forward.

FGC (Friends General Conference): an organization of yearly meetings and other Quaker groups in North America, including Illinois Yearly Meeting. Originally a Hicksite organization, FGC now includes meetings from a variety of Quaker traditions, though primarily of an unprogrammed style of worship and liberal theological perspective.

First Day: The first day of the week, more commonly called Sunday. Similarly, Second Day is the day commonly called Monday; Third Day is the day commonly called Tuesday, etc. Early Friends did not use the common names of the days of the week because most of them derive from the names of Pagan gods, in whom they did not believe; some Friends continue to have similar scruples, or use the numerical names as an expression of Quaker identity and tradition.

First Day School: A children's program of religious instruction held on First Day, analogous to Sunday School in other denominations.

First Month: The first month of the year, more commonly called January. Similarly, Second Month is the month commonly called February; Third Month is the month commonly called March, etc. Early Friends did not use the common names of the months because most of them derive from the names of Pagan gods, in whom they did not believe; some Friends continue to have similar scruples, or use the numerical names as an expression of Quaker identity and tradition. Note: Prior to the calendar reform of 1752, First Month was the month commonly called March, Second Month was the month commonly called April, etc.

FLGBTQC (Friends for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer Concerns): a Quaker organization that affirms that of God in all people regardless of sexual orientation and gender identity.

FPT (Friends Peace Teams): a Quaker organization which develops long-term relationships with communities in conflict around the world, creating programs for peacebuilding, healing, and reconciliation.

Friend: A Quaker. Adherents to the Quaker movement have called each other "Friends" since very early in its history. A common explanation for the use of this term is that it is in reference to

John 15:14–17, but there is little in early Friends’ writings to corroborate this.

Friends Church: 1. A Friends meeting, especially a programmed or pastoral meeting. 2. The Religious Society of Friends. Used especially by Friends belonging to programmed or pastoral meetings.

FUM (Friends United Meeting): an international organization of Friends meetings. Originally an Orthodox organization, FUM now includes meetings from a wide variety of Quaker traditions, though primarily of an explicitly Christian perspective.

FWCC (Friends World Committee for Consultation): an international organization encouraging fellowship and communication among the various branches of the Religious Society of Friends.

Gathered meeting: A meeting in which worshipping Friends feel an unusually deep, quickening sense of connection with each other through the operation of the Spirit; a meeting in which the communal character of worship is strongly or vividly perceived.

Gift: A God-given ability intended to be used for spiritual purposes.

Good order: Right order.

Gospel order: The order of a community, or of the world more generally, as its members live in right relationship with one another and with God; the pattern of organization into which Divine guidance leads us.

Gurneyite: A Friend or meeting in the tradition of the supporters of Joseph John Gurney in the schisms which divided Orthodox Quakerism in the mid-19th century, characterized by a relatively evangelical perspective with emphasis on the authority of the Bible, and on the atoning power of the outward, “historical” crucifixion and resurrection.

Hicksite: A Friend or meeting in the tradition of the supporters of Elias Hicks in the schism of 1827–28, characterized by a strong

emphasis on doctrinal freedom and to some extent by Hicks' theological views, which downplayed the significance of the outward, "historical" crucifixion and resurrection except as "figures" of the inward operation of Christ's Spirit in each individual.

Hold in the Light: 1. To place mentally under the healing, beneficial influence of the Light Within; to pray for, especially wordlessly. 2. To examine or consider (a topic) with the aid of the Light Within; to consider while silencing one's thoughts and setting aside one's personal desires and rationalizations, in order to better discern Divine will.

Indulged meeting: An older term for allowed meeting or recognized meeting.

Inner Light, Inward Light: The Light Within.

Lay down: To discontinue; especially, to discontinue a meeting. Laying down a monthly meeting means discontinuing its business meeting as a monthly meeting, and is compatible with continuation of the meeting community in some other form.

Leading: A deeply felt, spiritually-based conviction, impelling one to engage in a particular course of action.

Light Within: The Divine presence held by Friends to be manifest in all people, conceptualized in a variety of ways but originally and still by many Friends identified with the Spirit of Christ. The Light Within reveals to us our true natures, makes clear to us what is right and what is wrong, leads us to act or suffer for Truth, and transforms us, as we allow it, into better people. Also referred to as the Spirit, that of God in everyone, or in a variety of other ways.

Meeting: 1. A meeting for worship, meeting for business, etc.; a gathering of Friends for religious purposes. 2. A body of Friends which holds such meetings on a regular basis.

Meeting for business: A Quaker business meeting; a meeting for worship in which Friends gather to make collective decisions

pertaining to the meeting community.

Meeting for marriage: A wedding; especially one conducted in the manner of Friends, in which the couple marry each other without a separate officiant to marry them.

Meeting for sufferings: A body appointed to conduct business on behalf of a yearly meeting in the interim between its annual business sessions, so called because such business originally consisted primarily of action in support of Friends who were imprisoned or otherwise suffering for their religious convictions. The corresponding body in Illinois Yearly Meeting is the Continuing Committee.

Meeting for worship: A gathering for the purpose of worship, understood by Friends to be a collective waiting in silence, from which anyone present may speak as led to do so by the Spirit.

Meeting for worship with a concern for business, meeting for worship with attention to business: A Friends meeting for business. So called because Friends wait in such meetings to be guided by the Divine Spirit, just as in ordinary meetings for worship where no business is conducted.

Meeting of ministers and elders: Historically, a meeting in which the ministers and elders of a Quaker community gathered on a regular basis to consider their ministry and other conduct, and respond to queries pertaining to it. Such meetings have now mostly been replaced by worship and ministry committees.

Meetinghouse: The building in which Friends hold their meetings, especially if owned by the meeting and dedicated to that purpose. Note: The body of Friends which gathers in a meetinghouse is referred to simply as a “meeting,” not as a “meetinghouse.”

Member: A person having membership in a Friends meeting, standing in a relation of mutual care and accountability with the meeting community.

Memorial Meeting: A meeting for worship held in memory of a person who has died; a Quaker memorial service.

Minister: A Friend who ministers to the spiritual needs of others, especially one who feels a long-term, ongoing call to such service and is recognized by a meeting as having a gift for such work.

Ministry: Speech or action which benefits the spiritual condition of others, such as speech offered under a sense of Divine leading in meeting for worship.

Monthly meeting: 1. The primary level of Quaker business meeting, conducting the business of a single local meeting, or in some cases, of a small number of meetings across a limited region. The monthly meeting is the level at which membership resides. 2. The body of Friends whose business is conducted in such a meeting.

Opening: 1. A revelation or new understanding of a spiritual truth. 2. An opportunity for spirit-led action.

Orthodox Friends: Friends or meetings in the tradition of the opponents of Elias Hicks in the schism of 1827–1828, in modern times represented by FUM, EFCI and the Conservative meetings.

Outrun one's Guide: To say more in meeting for worship than one is led to say by the Spirit; or more generally to allow one's personal will to guide actions which were begun under a sense of Divine leading.

Overseer: Historically, a Friend appointed to labor with those meeting members whose conduct appeared to be inconsistent with Quaker principles, and if necessary, bring their cases to the monthly meeting. The role of overseers later evolved to the coordination of pastoral care for a meeting. Use of the term overseers for pastoral care committees is now strongly discouraged, as for some Friends this term may carry connotations connected with slavery.

Particular meeting: A local congregation of Friends, whether organized as a monthly meeting, preparative meeting, or worship group.

Pastoral meeting: A meeting in which a particular individual is appointed as pastor.

Plain dress: Attire chosen in accordance with Quaker ideals of simplicity, plainness and modesty: free of ornamentation or superfluities, and without respect to the vain and changing whims of fashion. Through much of the history of Quakerism, plain dress was understood to involve a long straight coat with a stand-up collar and broad-brimmed hat for men, and a long skirt, shawl and bonnet for women; but such attire has now become rare.

Plain speech: Speech in a style conforming to Quaker ideals of simplicity, plainness and honesty: free of flattery and euphemism, with no honorific titles or honorific pronouns, and avoiding all terminology which is inconsistent with one's religious convictions. Traditionally, plain speech was understood to require the use of the old second person singular pronoun thee and its related forms when addressing just one individual; using numerical names for the days of the week and months of the year such as First Day, First Month; and avoiding the use of certain greetings and leave-takings, such as good day and Godspeed.

Popcorn meeting: An informal term for a meeting for worship during which multiple Friends speak in quick succession, with little silence in between, especially if the speaking is regarded as excessive or as detracting from the depth of worship.

Preparative meeting: The business meeting of a single local meeting, forming part of a larger monthly meeting; or the body of Friends whose business is conducted in such a meeting.

Programmed meeting: A meeting with a set order of service, as opposed to a meeting held entirely in waiting worship.

Progressive Friends: A movement which separated from the main body of Hicksite Friends in the mid-19th century, characterized by

an emphasis on doctrinal freedom, local autonomy for meetings, no formal recognition of ministers or elders, and robust political engagement. Progressive Friends gradually dwindled away as a separate body, but much of their perspective and practice has been adopted into the wider Quaker world.

Public Friend: A Friend who undertakes extended ministry outside their home meeting.

QEW (Quaker Earthcare Witness): a network of people taking action to address the ecological and social crises of the world from a spiritual perspective emphasizing Quaker process and testimonies.

Quaker: A Friend; a member of the Religious Society of Friends; an adherent to the spiritual movement this Society represents. Originally a derogatory term for Friends used by people outside the movement, it has long since been embraced by Friends and lost the scornful tone it once conveyed.

Quarterly meeting: A regional body of Friends, consisting of more than one monthly meeting and forming part of a larger yearly meeting; or the business meeting of such a body.

Query: A question, especially a question posed to guide self-examination and discernment. Historically, meetings were expected to provide regular written responses to a series of queries about their spiritual and practical conditions. Nowadays queries are more often considered by meetings or individuals simply as a contemplative practice, without minuting or reporting the responses.

Quietism: A variety of Quakerism emphasizing separation from mainstream society, strict meeting discipline, and a relatively hierarchical meeting structure. Quietism was the predominant form of Quakerism through much of the 18th and 19th centuries, but the term was not introduced until later.

Read out of meeting: To disown; to terminate a Friend's membership for cause.

Recognized meeting: A regularly held meeting for worship, formally established by a monthly meeting but held at some distance from it; a worship group held under the minuted care of a monthly meeting.

Recommended minister: A recorded minister.

Recorded minister: An individual who has been recorded in the minutes of a meeting as having an ongoing gift and leading to minister to the spiritual needs of others.

Recorder: An individual appointed to keep the membership records of a monthly meeting.

Recording clerk: 1. An individual appointed to record the minutes of a business meeting, usually sharing with the clerk the responsibility for composing the wording of those minutes. 2. In some yearly meetings, such as Britain Yearly Meeting, a senior staff member charged with a variety of executive and managerial duties for the yearly meeting.

Released Friend: A Friend who has been released by their meeting from other responsibilities, in order to engage in ministry or follow a leading. Release is sometimes understood to involve financial support.

Religious Society of Friends: The entire Quaker movement, considered as a single body or organization.

Right order: Practices and procedures which have been found to help Friends in conducting their business and witness according to careful discernment of spiritual leadings.

Rise of meeting: The end of a meeting for worship, when the worshippers leave their seats.

Season: To take under an extended process of discernment; to consider deeply and at length.

Sense of the meeting: The united understanding of the Friends gathered in a meeting for business, regarding some proposed

decision or other issue under consideration.

Society of Friends: The Religious Society of Friends.

Sojourning membership: A temporary form of membership, in a meeting where one expects to be staying for a limited time. If and when the sojourn ends, membership reverts automatically to one's home meeting.

Speak to one's condition: To touch one deeply and spiritually, in a way which is suited to the particulars of one's inward state.

Spirit: The Divine presence in all people, by which we are guided, comforted, and transformed for the better; the Light Within, or that of God in everyone.

Stand aside: To state one's lack of unity with a decision in business meeting, while agreeing that the decision may proceed despite this lack of unity.

Stand in the way: To declare opposition on a spiritual basis to a proposal in business meeting, with the intent of stopping a decision in favor of the proposal. Standing in the way does not completely shut down the decision-making process, and normally requires taking some responsibility for helping the meeting find another way forward.

State of Society Report: A report prepared by a meeting, outlining its spiritual and practical condition. In Illinois Yearly Meeting, monthly meetings prepare a State of Society Report at least annually, which is read in the quarterly meeting (if any) and published in the yearly meeting minute book.

Steward: One into whose care something of value is placed. More specifically in Illinois Yearly Meeting, one of a group of individuals appointed to manage the real estate and tangible property of the yearly meeting.

Sufferings Fund: A fund administered by a meeting, dedicated to the aid of Friends who are suffering for their religious convictions, or for other purposes as decided by the meeting.

Support Committee: A committee charged with providing spiritual or practical support to a person facing challenging circumstances, or engaged in the pursuit of a leading.

Testimony: A religious truth to which one testifies. Applied in modern Friends' usage especially to general concepts encapsulating the principles and values by which Friends aim to order their lives, such as integrity, peace, simplicity, equality, community, and stewardship.

That of God in everyone: The Divine presence in all people, through which every life has value and the capacity for good; the Spirit, or Light Within.

Thee: The second person singular pronoun. Historically in English, when speaking to just one person, it was usual to address that person using the pronouns thou, thee, thy and thine. In contrast, a group was addressed using the plural pronouns ye, you, your and yours. By the time the Quaker movement began, it had become common to address a single individual using a plural pronoun as a form of honor or flattery, especially if the addressee was of higher social status than the speaker. Quakers objected to this usage as arising from a spirit of pride, and insisted on the use of thou, thee, thy and thine when addressing a single individual, regardless of social hierarchy. (In colloquial Quaker usage, thou eventually came to be replaced by thee, and the second person singular verb forms by forms similar to the third person singular.) Over the centuries, you and its related forms have gradually lost all honorific connotations, and few Friends continue to use thee and its related forms; but some do, mainly as an expression of Quaker identity and tradition.

Threshing meeting: 1. In early Quakerism, a meeting with the general public, held to identify those individuals who might be interested in becoming involved with the Quaker movement. 2. A threshing session.

Threshing session: A meeting in which an issue is given preliminary consideration and discussion, with no final decision expected.

Travel minute: A minute issued by a meeting, indicating that the meeting supports a particular individual as they travel in the ministry or under a sense of religious concern; or, a document attesting that such a minute has been approved by the meeting, which the traveling Friend carries and presents to any meetings they visit, as certification of the home meeting's support.

Under the care of (a meeting): With the official support and oversight of the meeting; in a relation of mutual responsibility with the meeting.

Unprogrammed meeting: A meeting whose worship is held with no planned order of service; a meeting which engages in waiting worship.

Unprogrammed worship: Worship with no planned order of service; waiting worship.

Vocal ministry: Spoken words intended to help the spiritual condition of other people, especially speech given under a sense of Divine leading in meeting for worship.

Waiting worship: Worship in which Friends wait silently to be moved by the Spirit to speak in prayer or ministry, as opposed to worship with a planned order of service.

Weighty Friend: A highly respected Friend, especially one whose discernment often has a strong influence on meeting decision-making.

Wilburite: A Friend or meeting in the tradition of the supporters of John Wilbur in the schisms which divided Orthodox Quakerism in the mid-19th century, characterized by a strong emphasis on plainness, separation from the world, traditionalism, and a rejection of the evangelical movement.

Worship group: A local group which meets regularly for worship in the manner of Friends, especially if not organized as a monthly or preparative meeting.

Worship sharing: A modern Quaker practice in which the members of a small group share their thoughts or feelings with one another in a worshipful way, usually in response to a specific theme or query.

Yearly meeting: A regional or national body of Friends, normally gathering for business once per year and consisting of multiple quarterly and/or monthly meetings; or the business meeting of such a body.

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