

**Book of Discipline
of the
Yearly Meeting
of
Christian Friends
(Evangelical Quakers)**

2020

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Introduction

In the morning of the Gospel day, the apostles and the disciples believed it was not only desirable but necessary to meet together for the consolation and strength one of another; and from the nature and design of the gospel of Christ, it brought them goodwill and peace. A care then arose for the edification of the church, and that all, being of one family, might be of one mind.

With great yearning and anguish of spirit, George Fox sought the light of Christ and found occasional openings which brought him a degree of comfort and peace. And until at last he heard that voice which spoke to his innermost soul: "There is one, even Christ Jesus, that can speak to thy condition." In speaking of the voice, George Fox said, "When I heard it, my heart did leap for joy."

He found the way to communion with God without aid of ritual or clergy, and henceforth his distinctive Quaker message to his generation was that Christ speaks directly to each human soul who seeks him. Spiritual life depends upon direct communion with him, and all men may find salvation and life in him.

The founders of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) were inspired with a degree of the goodwill and love which introduced the dispensation of the gospel of Christ. We are engaged, therefore, not only to meet together for the worship of God, but also for the exercise of a Christian care over each other, for the preservation of all in unity of faith and practise, answerable to the description which he, Christ, the ever blessed Shepherd, gave of his flock. "By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if you have love one for another" (John 13:35).

This belief in the immediate presence of the light of Christ within the soul, and in his power to transform men into sons of God has always been the

vital message of Friends. It is a faith that does not stand on Christian creed or outward ritual, but on the experience of the presence of God in the individual heart. It is universal in its scope, and speaks to the spiritual needs of all men.

We believe that true baptism is the experience of being filled with God's love which cleanses from all unrighteousness. The Apostle John said, "I indeed have baptised you with water: but he shall baptise you with the Holy Spirit" (Mark 1:8). It is the change and purification within, the spiritual fact rather than the outward symbol, which is indeed the true baptism.

Friends place special emphasis on the ever-present Holy Spirit in the hearts of men. This power we call the light of Christ within. We believe that a seed of this spirit is in every man. The basis of faith is thus the belief that God endows each human being with a measure of Christ's spirit. He leaves no one without witness, but gives the light of his truth and presence to men of all races and walks of life. Love, the outworking of this spirit of Christ, is the most potent influence that can be applied to the affairs of men. The Society of Friends believes this application of love to the whole of life to be the core of the Christian doctrine. As we in ourselves become conscious of the inward light of Christ within and submit ourselves to his leadings, we are enabled to live in conformity to the will of our Heavenly Father.

Growing directly out of this belief in the inward light of Christ is our ideal of worship. In our assemblies the Holy Spirit speaks directly to the human soul, and worship is a personal communion with God and a yielding of ourselves to God's will, for which no form and aid of clergy is necessary. This communion may be realised in a true and vital way though there be no vocal ministry. A living silence may be so filled with Christ's presence that all who worship become conscious of it and are drawn together in

unity under the power of his love. We concur with George Fox where he states, "The least member in the church has an office, and is serviceable; and every member has need one of another."

As all unite before Christ the true head of the church, a spiritual democracy becomes a reality. Vocal ministry in such a Meeting, whether prayer, exhortation, or teaching, should be uttered under the direct authority and guidance of the Holy Spirit. We fully recognise the importance of intellectual and spiritual training of each member in preparation for any service which may be laid upon him, so that when the great commission is given he may serve with his fullest ability as well as with a ready and glad heart.

We would conclude this introduction by desiring, in an especial manner, that our young people may be early and fully instructed in our religious principles, and in the nature and design of our Christian testimonies, and through God's assistance be enabled to maintain our holy calling by conversation and conduct consistent with honesty and godliness. Each person must seek to know prayerfully and humbly God's leading, and read the Bible, especially the marvelous life and teachings of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Membership

Just as for the earliest Christian church, so for the Society of Friends, the membership constitutes the body of the church, under Christ, our head. "So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and everyone members of one another" (Romans 12:5). Consequently, membership is considered a privilege entailing a corresponding responsibility, first of all toward Christ, and secondly toward one another.

Application for Membership

An application for membership is made in writing to the overseers, who, if satisfied, are to lay it before the Monthly Meeting. This Meeting appoints two Friends to meet with the applicant. When satisfied of the sincerity of his belief of the Christian truths which we hold and his desire to let this Christian faith govern his life, the two Friends report back to the Monthly Meeting, which, if satisfied with the report, makes a minute recording the applicant's acceptance into membership. The Meeting then asks the two Friends to notify the new member and welcome him into our midst.

Parents or guardians may apply for membership for young children who are minors. Such a request should be made to the overseers, who, if satisfied, shall present it to the Monthly Meeting, and unless a good reason for denying the request is apparent, Monthly Meetings are directed to receive such children into membership.

One whose membership has been discontinued and who desires to be reinstated may be received back into membership in the same or another Monthly Meeting by our usual procedure of application.

Recording of Membership

Each Monthly Meeting is directed to appoint a recorder, whose duty it is to keep in a bound book provided for the purpose, a chronological record of each change in the membership. The record book must show all births, deaths, and marriages, and admissions to and removals from membership in order of occurrence. In addition to this, a loose-leaf record of each individual member and attender, and sojourning member shall be kept, arranged in alphabetical order, in a binder.

Monthly Meetings are further directed to appoint a group of Friends annually to examine and report upon these records, and to give such assistance as may be necessary to keep the books in order.

It is also recommended that Monthly Meetings, possibly through their overseers, review their membership lists periodically, contact inactive members and attenders and release from membership those who are no longer interested or who cannot be reached.

Certificates of Membership

We admonish Friends to be sure of their leadings before changing their residence, weighing carefully the values to be gained against those of greater stability in the lives of themselves and particularly of their children.

Sojourning Membership

It is recommended that all members moving beyond the limits of their Monthly Meeting request their membership be transferred to a Meeting nearer their new residence at the time of their removal or soon after. Friends moving for a limited period of time are encouraged to take with them temporary, or sojourning certificates of membership, which retain full membership in their home Meeting. If a Friend removes outside the limits of the Meeting in which he has sojourning membership, such sojourning membership shall cease unless he and the Meeting agree to continue his sojourning membership for special reasons.

Removal of Membership

When request for a certificate of removal is made, the Monthly Meeting is to appoint a group of Friends to prepare a suitable certificate, if nothing appears to prevent, and present it to the Meeting for its approval.

When a Monthly Meeting receives certificates of removal for persons from other Meetings, the persons shall be considered members as from

the dating of the certificate. These certificates should be promptly recorded, as should all certificates of removal given out by a Monthly Meeting.

Statement of Membership

Isolated members who desire a statement (certificate) of their membership standing should inform their Monthly Meeting of the nature of their request, and Monthly Meetings should use their discretion in the matter.

Termination of Membership

If a member offers his resignation, either the overseers or a group of Friends appointed by the Monthly Meeting should visit the individual Friend in love, inquire into the cause of his resignation and, if appropriate, endeavour to bring him back into fellowship with Friends. If his purpose continues unchanged, and the Meeting accedes, a minute may be made stating that he is released at his own request. The individual Friend should be notified at once, in writing, of this action.

Letters written in acceptance of a resignation should always manifest an affectionate regard for the person thus severing connections with our Society.

If a member disregards the obligations of membership, or fails to show interest in the Meeting, thus indicating that he does not value his membership with Friends, the overseers or a group of Friends appointed by the Monthly Meeting may make loving contact with him and try to bring back his interest in the Meeting. If he fails to respond to such friendly concern, or if he cannot be contacted over an extended period of time, the Monthly Meeting may make a minute of the case stating that his name is removed from the membership list.

Any member who has taken actions which put him out of unity with his Meeting and who is inclined to make an acknowledgment, may present a

written and signed statement to the Monthly Meeting. He should retire from the Meeting after the acknowledgment is read.

The acknowledgment should be considered on the basis of the offender's sincerity and contrition. After the Monthly Meeting makes its decision the person should be notified. The same procedure applies to members under the care of overseers or a group of Friends for any offence.

If any member feels disunity with Friends or behaves in a manner that gives the overseers grave concern, he may be dealt with in a similar manner. This should always be done in a loving spirit with the hope that he will again join in Christian unity with Friends.

In any situation when a person is released from membership other than by his own request, he should be promptly notified of the action and told that he has the right to appeal to the Quarterly Meeting.

Maintaining Contacts

Isolated Friends should not be neglected by their fellow members. Meetings are urged to contact absent members and attenders at least once a year, giving them help and encouragement whenever possible.

Birthright Membership

Parents or guardians may request birthright membership for their children. Birthright members are eligible to take full part in the affairs of the Meeting. Birthright membership will end at age 21. If a person has not requested Full membership by that time, the overseers should meet with that person to determine whether continued membership in the Meeting is appropriate.

Full Membership

Full membership requires a commitment to be an active part of the Friends Meeting. Full membership should not be viewed as a right or a privilege

but as a covenant to this particular expression of Christ's body. This commitment entails a character of servanthood, as exemplified by Jesus' washing his disciples' feet. It includes responsibility for the continued spiritual growth of oneself and other members of the Friends Meeting.

Meeting for Worship

The Yearly Meeting has a heartfelt concern that our meetings offer a form of worship which is simple, pure, and spiritual.

We meet together in silence and strive to free our minds and hearts for the purpose of spiritual worship of Christ. We must then wait in humble reverence for the spiritual ability to worship the Lord of Heaven and Earth in a manner acceptable to him.

As each soul feels a spirit of supplication answered by the quickening influence of the Holy Spirit, we approach God's throne of grace; that is to say, we are enabled to enter into an attitude of true worship, in gratitude and praise.

Though the nearness to God may result in spoken ministry or vocal prayer, the distinctive excellence of heavenly favour consists in the direct communication with the Heavenly Father by the inward revelation of the spirit of Christ.

It is urged that Friends encourage their children and others under their care in the habit of regular and orderly attendance at both First-Day Meeting for Worship and other Meetings. Such should be taught, in proportion to their understanding, how to wait in stillness upon the Lord, that they, too, may receive their portion of his spiritual favour through the tendering influence of the Spirit of God.

Drowsiness and habitual tardiness are not necessarily evidence of a negligent attitude toward the living purpose of our meetings for worship,

but because they might appear so, both should be avoided as far as possible, lest they become hindrances to others present.

In preparation for meeting for worship on a Sunday, the individual member or attender may find that he becomes quiet in expectation, or he may desire to read Scripture as a quieting discipline. A weekly attendance at First-Day School will be found helpful in this preparation process with engagement in vocal prayer and Bible study, and the singing of famous hymns, and of contemporary praise and worship songs and choruses accompanied by maybe a guitar player.

We appoint three and a half hours to meet for vocal prayer and Bible study, congregational singing, and waiting worship. The Meeting ends with an hour of silence, according to the injunction, "Be still and know that I am God" (Psalms 46:10). Friends thus allow themselves to become quiet by putting aside words, thoughts of business, cares, and topics of the day.

Not all Friends can become truly quiet instantly or at every meeting for worship. It cannot be done at will; indeed, "will" too often proves an obstacle. After a time, however, a number of worshippers do seem to be sharing the guiding presence of the Spirit of God. Vocal ministry or spoken prayer may or may not occur, springing from the heart of one or more worshippers. Anyone who feels called by an inward urging of the Holy Spirit to speak are advised to do so, simply and clearly.

As the meeting for worship continues, there comes a time when a Friend, chosen beforehand, feels the appropriate time has come to close the Meeting, and shakes hands with his nearest neighbour.

Meeting for Church Affairs

The Society of Friends endeavours in all its meetings for church affairs to nurture and conserve the spiritual worship already described. The

following method of conducting meeting for church affairs has been found equally effective in small or large groups. A meeting for church affairs begins, and should also end, in worship. As business is brought before them, Friends try to continue in a spirit of search for God's guidance. It naturally follows that there can be no rightful or satisfactory decision of a matter until there is a large measure of unity in it. Thus our business is decided by the corporate "sense of the meeting," and not by a majority vote.

As business proceeds Friends speak to it, each according to his best insight. Often the insights of several Friends contribute to a decision more serviceable than any single suggestion. As Friends approach agreement, the clerk composes a minute declaring what the will of God appears to be. When a minute is finally approved, it becomes part of the permanent record. If the Meeting fails to reach agreement on an issue, or declines to deal with it, a brief minute is prepared either dismissing it or postponing the decision to a future time.

Procedure for Meeting for Church Affairs

The right conduct of our meetings for church affairs, even in matters of routine, is important to our spiritual life, for in so far as Friends are concerned in promoting the kingdom of God, we should rightly feel that its business is a service for him.

When we meet together, therefore, to transact the business of the Society, the same spiritual fellowship realised in our times of worship together should continue through our meetings for church affairs. The practice of beginning and concluding our meetings for church affairs with a time of worship is of the greatest significance.

It is important for purposes of clarity that all minutes regarding actions to be taken by the Meeting, and those relevant to issues of Faith, be read in

final form and approved by the Meeting before the close of that Meeting. Friends are reminded that inspired clerkship requires the continued prayerful support of the gathered body of Friends.

All members and attenders are encouraged to attend all meetings for church affairs, realising that the spiritual nurture and fellowship and the sense of community which our membership confers upon us must be maintained by our common efforts, and that the loving concern which we feel for our Friends must be shown in our actions.

A group of Friends should be appointed annually in each Monthly and Quarterly Meeting, to nominate a clerk to serve for the following year. The clerk is to preside at all meetings for church affairs, keep accurate records of proceedings in a book provided for the purpose, and handle all correspondence of the Meeting. Monthly Meetings, particularly, are advised to attend to and finish all business with care and dispatch, that nothing may suffer through delay.

It is the decision of the Yearly Meeting, as a general rule for all cases, that where any Monthly or Quarterly Meeting has occasion for, and requests, copies of any papers, minutes, or records of another Monthly or Quarterly Meeting, the same should be granted. When serious differences occur among Friends and are recorded in the Monthly or Quarterly Meeting minutes, all parties shall be furnished copies of the minutes so they can understand each other better.

Monthly and Quarterly Meetings are to record all minutes or letters of introduction given to Friends travelling in the ministry. When the concern of a Friend has been carried out, he is to return his minute to the Meeting which issued it, where its return is also to be recorded.

When any new Monthly Meeting is set up, this is to be done under the care of a Quarterly Meeting. Similarly, new Quarterly Meetings are set up

with the advice and approval of their Yearly Meeting. Preparative Meetings are set up under the care of a Monthly Meeting, and the same procedures are followed if Meetings are being laid down. When any new Meeting is officially opened, it should be attended by a group of Friends appointed by the Meeting which is supervising its setting-up. However, new meetings for worship are always to be welcomed and encouraged and promptly offered any direct help from such Friends as feel drawn to meet with them.

All appointments of officers or committees should be made under conditions clearly defined as to limitation or renewal.

In the session of the Monthly Meeting preceding each Quarterly Meeting, a few Friends are to be appointed representatives to attend that Meeting. Similarly, in the session of a Quarterly Meeting immediately preceding Yearly Meeting, at least four representatives shall be appointed to attend Yearly Meeting.

Property

Meetings should regularly examine the titles of all meeting houses held by them for the use and benefit of the Society. Whenever it appears needful, the Meeting shall promptly appoint new members to oversee the maintenance of the meeting house. It is further directed that Meetings shall keep exact records of all business transactions, and indicate where all their minutes, papers, and records have been deposited.

If a Preparative Meeting ceases to exist, all its property shall be transferred to its Monthly Meeting. If a Monthly Meeting ceases to exist, without merging or consolidating with another Monthly Meeting, all its property shall be transferred to its Quarterly Meeting. If a Quarterly Meeting ceases to exist, without merging or consolidating with another Quarterly Meeting, all its property shall be transferred to the Yearly Meeting. If two

or more Monthly Meetings or if two or more Quarterly Meetings merge or consolidate, all the property of them all shall be held by the merged Meeting. Such a transfer shall be authorized by an appropriate minute, duly recorded, and the transfer shall be executed and delivered by such Meetings before they are formally laid down or disbanded, or in the case of merged or consolidated Meetings, at the time of merger. In the event that such action is not taken by the Meetings before they are laid down, merged, or consolidated, the Monthly Meeting, the Quarterly Meeting, or the Yearly Meeting entitled to receive any such property shall become the owner. No property of the Meeting shall be distributed or partitioned among the individual members and attenders of a Meeting.

New Meetings

Since all of the Society's business should proceed from worship of Christ, each Preparative Meeting is also a potential business group. A group which has met regularly for weekly worship, and has grown to include several families, may organize and function as a meeting for church affairs. The Monthly Meeting, historically, is the basic business unit of the Society. A new group, ready for organization as a Monthly Meeting, should seek help, advice, and recognition from an established Yearly Meeting through one of its subordinate Meetings. When such a Meeting is satisfied as to the stability of a new Meeting, it may formally organize as a Monthly Meeting.

Existing Monthly Meetings should correspond with, visit, and encourage Preparative Meetings which have not yet organized as a Monthly Meeting. Such informal groups should name a person to serve as correspondent. When the Meeting is organized as a Monthly Meeting, the clerk will take on this duty.

Monthly Meetings

The Monthly Meeting alone has the responsibility for admission, recording and transferring of membership. It records the names and addresses of members and attenders, and is responsible for extending to them both spiritual care and such material aid as may sometimes be needed. It provides for the oversight of meetings for worship, of marriages and of funerals and of memorials.

Each Monthly Meeting is expected to report to and to send representatives to its Quarterly Meeting, and to extend care to and receive reports, if any, from its constituent Preparative Meetings.

The Monthly Meeting is responsible for the collection of funds needed for the work of its own and superior Meetings. It may hold title to meeting houses and other real estate, and may undertake the administration of funds.

It recognises recorded ministers. It appoints elders and overseers, clerks and treasurers. It may appoint groups of Friends for leadership, counsel, ministry, or other purposes, all for stated periods of time. The concern of any member for extension of Friends' work into new fields, or for taking up of specific tasks, may be introduced for the consideration or support of the Monthly Meeting. In short, the Monthly Meeting is free to undertake any work, or to assume any function consistent with our Christian principles, which is not specifically assigned to some other Meeting. The Monthly Meeting may undertake, usually with the cooperation of the Quarterly Meeting, the oversight of newly started meetings; helping, advising, and encouraging all such forms of Christian outreach.

On due notice given to the membership and clerks, the Monthly Meeting may be called into special session by its body of overseers.

Quarterly Meetings

The Quarterly Meeting, covering a larger area and representing the insights of a larger number of Friends, occupies a valuable intermediary place among the Monthly Meetings.

Its functions are mainly of two kinds. First, for coordinating or confirming religious concerns referred to it by a constituent Meeting for its guidance or broader outlook and larger wisdom; or, on occasion, for its additional weight in upholding a decision made under particularly difficult circumstances. A second and more perfunctory role is the carrying forward of routine reports or real concerns from the constituent Meetings to the Yearly Meeting. It also has the duty of appointing its own representatives to the Yearly Meeting.

Normally, its most useful function would seem to be that of helpful counsellor to its Monthly Meetings, stimulating them to greater activity or Christian outreach, and confirming their efforts to encourage throughout the membership a greater realisation of the ever-growing revelations of the Truth.

Like the Monthly Meeting, the Quarterly Meeting may appoint for definite periods its own officers as well as groups of Friends for various services.

Yearly Meeting

Our Yearly Meeting is designed to have general oversight of our Society, and to transact its business affairs. It is both a serious and a joyous opportunity for its members to meet together in unity of purpose. As a consequence of the united spiritual concern felt by those attending, and the deep searching for God's will pervading the whole assembly, its meetings for church affairs, as well as those for worship, become times of spiritual refreshing.

Procedure for Yearly Meeting

The Clerk for the Yearly Meeting is appointed annually by the Quarterly Meeting representatives. He presides at the meetings for church affairs, read reports, record minutes and answers routine correspondence. Names of Quarterly Meeting representatives, and all written reports, are to be given to the clerk well in advance of the session at which they are to be read.

Representatives, if unable to attend all sessions, should advise the Yearly Meeting Clerk.

The Nominations Committee, to be appointed as directed by the Yearly Meeting, must be a representative body. It is to bring forward nominations for all appointments referred to it by the Yearly Meeting.

An Epistle Drafting Committee shall draft a General Epistle which shall be twice read and then considered by Friends. The General Epistle as approved in committee session shall be read and adopted in the concluding session of Yearly Meeting. In addition, the committee is asked to prepare covering letters (for the signature of the Clerk of Yearly Meeting) to accompany the copy of the General Epistle sent to other Yearly Meetings throughout the world. The committee is to read all epistles directed to the Yearly Meeting and to select what seems most helpful to be read to the whole assembly.

A Treasurer is to be appointed annually to have charge of funds, to pay bills, and distribute appropriations, at the direction of the Yearly Meeting. His accounts are to be examined yearly by an Auditor which is also to draw up a budget for the needs of the coming year. The Treasurer should notify the Monthly Meetings of their quotas. The subject of apportionment of funds and distribution of documents should be annually reviewed by the Quarterly Meeting representatives to Yearly Meeting.

The minutes and proceedings of the Yearly Meeting are to be printed each year and distributed to all members and attenders through the Monthly Meetings as soon as possible after the close of the sessions.

Meeting for Sufferings

Between annual sessions, urgent business of the Yearly Meeting is to be conducted by Meeting for Sufferings. The Meeting for Sufferings is to meet once every three months in the year. Members present are required to conduct business affairs. The Meeting for Sufferings is to keep written minutes of its proceedings and present them to the Yearly Meeting annually for its approval. Members of Meeting for Sufferings are urged to give a brief report of the business of Meeting for Sufferings at their next monthly meeting for church affairs.

The duties of the Meeting for Sufferings are as follows:

1. In general, to act for the Yearly Meeting when it is not in session.
2. To represent the Yearly Meeting, and to appear on its behalf, whenever the interest or reputation of the Society of Friends may call for it.
3. To authorise any material to be published and distributed under the name of the Yearly Meeting, including any memorials of deceased Friends.
4. To extend to individuals under suffering for testimonies, such advice and assistance as their cases may require and, if necessary, to apply to persons in authority, or to the government, on their behalf.
5. To assist in the care of the Yearly Meeting House.

The Meeting for Sufferings may draw on the treasurer of the Yearly Meeting to cover its expenses. The Meeting for Sufferings is not to adopt

any article of faith or book of discipline which has not been authorised by the Yearly Meeting.

Meeting for Ministry, Eldership, and Oversight

The chief responsibility of the Meeting for Ministry, Eldership, and Oversight is to foster the spiritual life of the Meeting. The members should seek together for sensitivity and discernment that will enable them to caution or encourage as needed those who appear in vocal ministry and to draw forth those who may be neglecting their spiritual gifts.

The members of this group should always be open to new leadings from God and willing to take action in any new direction which may stimulate the spiritual life and development of our members and attenders.

They should also feel a deep concern to promote the daily reading of the Bible, and of orthodox Christian literature both ancient and modern which will strengthen and deepen the spiritual life.

The Meeting for Ministry, Eldership, and Oversight is composed of the elders, overseers, and recorded ministers. They are grouped into Monthly, Quarterly, and Yearly Meeting bodies on the basis of the territories from which they come and which they are to serve.

The elders, overseers, and recorded ministers of each Monthly Meeting will meet together in a Monthly Meeting for Ministry, Eldership, and Oversight. It is required that they meet once a month as the opportunity to serve may appear. This Meeting shall appoint one of its members to serve as clerk.

Members of Ministry, Eldership, and Oversight should have the care of any appointed meetings in their Monthly Meeting area and should be responsible for the proper and regular reading aloud of the Advices.

A Meeting for Ministry, Eldership, and Oversight shall not interfere with the affairs of any meeting for church affairs, but it may present any subject which it feels should be considered therein.

The Queries and Advices addressed to this body are to be regularly read and considered.

Representatives from the Monthly Meeting should be appointed to attend the Quarterly Meeting, and also members should be named as Yearly Meeting representatives from the Quarterly Meeting.

Function and Qualifications of Elders

In every meeting for worship there is a vital and a continuing need for a nucleus of Friends who feel exceptional concern for the deeper spiritual life of the Meeting. They will also feel a concern for the encouragement and guidance of the vocal ministry.

These, however, are but the primary qualifications to be looked for in elders. Ideally, they need, in addition, a considerable insight into character, an alert spiritual discernment, exceptionally good judgment, and a fund of ready tact and open friendliness. All these qualifications should be humbly dedicated to a deeply felt zeal for the spiritual growth of the Society, and upheld and purified by the power of constant prayer.

Elders should feel a particular duty to give encouragement and oversight to those who appear in the vocal ministry or public prayer.

Appointment and Renewal of Elders

Wherever possible, the Monthly Meeting shall appoint at least two Friends of each sex, preferably not overseers, to serve as elders in each particular Meeting. It shall name a group of judicious and experienced Friends to consider carefully the persons best suited for such special service. When the group of Friends agrees upon nominations it shall

present the names to the Monthly Meeting, which in turn shall consider them separately and weightily. The nominations shall not be accepted or rejected in the same session in which they are presented. The following month, if the persons named are acceptable, the Monthly Meeting shall appoint them elders, and so inform the Meeting for Ministry, Eldership, and Oversight.

The Monthly Meeting of Ministry, Eldership, and Oversight or the Quarterly Meeting of Ministry, Eldership, and Oversight may also nominate elders to the Monthly Meeting at any time they feel so led. It should be recognised by all that true eldership is a God-bestowed gift and function, which may occur whether an individual is an official elder or not.

The appointments shall be for terms not longer than one year and shall be eligible for renewal or change at the discretion of the Monthly Meeting.

The office of elder being vested in his own meeting for church affairs cannot be conveyed with him to another Monthly Meeting. An elder who loses fitness for his office should promptly have such care by the Monthly and Quarterly Meetings for Ministry, Eldership, and Oversight as may be needed, before the matter be referred by minute to the Monthly Meeting.

Overseers

The Friends Meeting being a community of believers, its members and attenders are responsible for one another in both their human and spiritual needs. The pastoral care of the members and attenders in their personal and temporal lives is the responsibility of the overseers; the oversight of the spiritual life of the Meeting and particularly, the meeting for worship, is chiefly the concern of the Meeting for Ministry, Eldership, and Oversight.

Appointment and Renewal of Overseers

Monthly Meetings are advised to appoint, on nomination by a group of Friends, at least two Friends of each sex from each monthly or quarterly meeting, to serve as overseers.

Since the duties of overseers may be various, and always vital to the life of the Meetings they serve, the Monthly Meeting should be careful to select Friends of different ages, spiritual gifts, and experience, if possible, and all of these should be active and well concerned members, imbued with a deep sense of responsibility toward the vitality and well-being of the Society.

It is recommended that after a year these appointments should be reviewed by a group of Friends appointed to consider the propriety of changing the overseers. Other Friends, equally concerned for the well-being of the membership and the Meeting, may be appointed, to the improvement of their spiritual gifts. By this means, opportunity also will be afforded for a relief from labours for those who have faithfully fulfilled their turn of stewardship.

Duties of Overseers

Overseers take responsibility for the Meeting's care over the welfare of Friends. They must, when needful, attempt to adjust complaints, or any estrangements from harmony, which might impair the happy participation of individuals in the worship or the business of their Meetings.

Overseers should take time and effort to become closely acquainted with all Friends. In proportion as they succeed in this, so will individuals the more readily come to them for confidential counsel. Any personal advice should be given privately in a spirit of meekness and love, with the intention to counsel patiently without offense to feelings.

Complaints from attenders shall be listened to, and as much care extended in their case as for members with us. Only thus may our belief be evinced in the equal and impartial administration of justice, without respect of persons.

On behalf of the Monthly Meeting, the overseers shall make routine inquiry into all applications for and resignations from the membership. They shall also make an annual review of the membership status of all birthright members. They shall be responsible for preparing answers to the Administrative Queries for the consideration of the Monthly Meeting.

The overseers should at all times be sensitive to the desires of the Monthly Meeting.

While the Yearly Meeting and our Monthly Meetings place special responsibility upon the overseers, this is not intended to relieve other members from the duty and privilege of shepherding the flock. Rather it should be felt of mutual advantage to all, that the overseers give spiritual prompting and encouragement, as leaders in this respect, acknowledging that other members may be even more gifted than they for certain offices. This may be particularly true concerning the local community beyond the Meeting itself.

Meetings of Overseers

The overseers appointed in each Monthly Meeting should meet together regularly for their mutual encouragement, and to counsel together on how best to carry out their work in a spirit of love and consecration.

They should be prepared as a group to keep the peace, appease want, and discourage swearing, hurtful criticism and unkind gossip; also to consider the Christian influence of their own daily lives and to be concerned for the influences likely to arise from the social life of their fellow members and attenders. They should have a sense of the local community beyond

the Meeting itself, of how the Meeting relates to the local community, and what it is doing for it. Any person so desiring, whether a member with us or not, may bring business before the overseers, by prior arrangement with one of them.

Special Counsel for the Consideration of Overseers

The Yearly Meeting feels that proper oversight not only is essential in our Meetings, but that the office of overseer, when rightly fulfilled, can be of great value to the individual member. The service is one bringing its own rich rewards, for it cannot properly be undertaken in one's own strength.

We would encourage those who are appointed to these positions of trust and influence to cherish an interest in and show an affectionate sympathy with our younger members and attenders, attempting to find good leadership for them, and suggesting ways in which they can be of service to the Meeting.

Overseers should endeavour early to become personally known to all who attend the Meetings, visiting in their homes and showing an affectionate interest in them.

Acknowledgement and Recording of Ministers

When a member or attender of the Society has frequently and serviceably spoken to the spiritual needs of himself and his fellow-worshippers in meeting for worship, Friends should encourage him in this invaluable form of service. If his spiritual gift for vocal ministry continues to grow, the Monthly Meeting for Ministry, Eldership, and Oversight, should take particular notice thereof. If that Meeting, after careful and prayerful consideration of the matter, feels that a true spiritual gift for vocal ministry has been bestowed, it should inform the Quarterly Meeting for Ministry, Eldership, and Oversight. If that body approves, it should encourage the

Monthly Meeting for Ministry, Eldership, and Oversight to present the matter to the Monthly Meeting for its consideration.

If after due and proper consideration, the Monthly Meeting likewise feels convinced that such a member ought to be acknowledged and recorded as a minister, he may be so recorded by the clerk.

Ministry of the Gospel

As the inward experience of communion with God is central to our life and worship, so are spoken testimonies of invaluable service to the Meeting. Such sharing is but the beginning of our duty to the whole of society. This is a distinctive, yet not exclusive, service of Gospel ministry. As Friends, we are persuaded that true Gospel ministry comes not of man, but through him by direct revelation from Jesus Christ by the prompting and guidance of the Holy Spirit. None the less, some Meetings, entirely silent, give ample evidence of deep spiritual life.

The essential qualification for the ministry is the direct preparation by God himself in those individuals who are called to the service. As the spiritual gift is bestowed by God, so the service should be freely and faithfully discharged without any view of reward from man. The express command of Christ, our head and high priest, was "Freely you have received, freely give."

One evidence that such messages are truly God-given is found in the peace experienced by those who deliver them, which seems to come as a rewarding sense of reassurance for humbly obeying an apparent "call." We think we see further proof of God's leading in the fact that the briefest heartfelt expression, voiced by the least experienced speaker, quite often is an inspiration to all who hear it.

From the beginning of our Society, Friends have held that men and women are equally qualified for vocal ministry, whether in our Meetings

or elsewhere in the world. Friends also believe that every member and attender should feel some responsibility for the quality of the meeting for worship, and that if all are but faithful and attentive to God's leadings vocal messages may come through any worshipper.

Vocal ministry needs watchful, sustained, and tender care under experienced spiritual guidance. Friends are thus advised to help each other to this end.

Procedure for Travel under Religious Concern

When a recorded minister or other concerned Friend feels called to religious service beyond his own Monthly Meeting, or to visit in Gospel love the families therein, he should first lay the matter before his Monthly Meeting, stating so far as he can foresee, the whole nature of the proposed service. If the Monthly Meeting feels free to unite with the religious concern, it shall make a minute to that effect, and furnish the minister with a copy thereof.

When the service is directed outside the recorded minister's own Quarterly Meeting, the Quarterly Meeting should be informed of the religious concern. If this Meeting approves, it should endorse the Monthly Meeting's minute, or issue a minute signed by its own clerks, thereby indicating its approval.

In the performance of such visits, in all cases where a minister travels in Gospel service, it is recommended that an elder should accompany him. This person may also be furnished with a minute of approval by his own Monthly Meeting. All such minutes should bear the signatures of the clerks of said Meetings.

If it should appear that the holding of any appointed Meetings might be interfered with by awaiting the sanction of the Quarterly Meeting, liberty for such appointment may be granted under the united sense of the elders

and overseers of the Monthly Meeting and/or those of the Meetings where the visit is being made.

The Yearly Meeting earnestly desires that, in laying a religious concern before his Monthly Meeting, a minister shall take the greatest care to avoid any misunderstanding as to the nature and scope of his religious concern.

After the accomplishment of such services, the Meetings which have granted minutes or certificates should be promptly notified and their documents returned to them without delay. Friends, returning minutes, are encouraged to report on their visits as fully as they feel easy to do, for the information and encouragement of the Meetings which have supported them in their religious concerns.

Any Meeting which grants minutes for travel should take care that the service is not hindered for lack of sufficient funds. The Meeting issuing a minute shall appoint a group of Friends to render any needed assistance to Friends during the religious service. These recommendations are not intended to restrict friendly visitations, nor to hamper ministers, elders, or other well concerned Friends, but to enable meetings to participate in, and foster, all calls to religious service in Gospel love.

A minute of introduction and greeting may be granted to a member who anticipates visiting other Friends during travel. Granting such a minute should be handled in manner similar to that of a travelling minute.

Administrative Queries

In order that we may remind ourselves of the importance of conducting our affairs in an orderly manner, and so that the Yearly Meeting may be informed of the state of the Society, it is directed that the following Administrative Queries be read, pondered, and answered once in the year by each Monthly and Quarterly Meeting, and a written report forwarded

to the Yearly Meeting, to be read, summarised, and approved at Yearly Meeting.

1. What are your new meetings? Have any of your meetings been laid down?
2. Do you take an interest in the quality of teaching of the schools in which your children attend? Do you send your children to Christian schools whenever possible? Do you help the parents in your meeting in the religious instruction of their children?
3. Do you read, ponder, and answer in writing, the Administrative Queries, the Queries for the State of the Yearly Meeting, and the Queries for Ministry, Eldership, and Oversight, in all your meetings? Are you regularly reading the Advices? Do you choose a good time for their reading, suitable for deliberate consideration of them by all the members and attenders of your meeting, and for their individual, and spiritual refreshment?
4. Do you store your former minute books, and all other records of importance, in a suitable safe which is fireproof?
5. Are your meetings for church affairs held each month, and do you attend them punctually and regularly? Are your meetings conducted with loving and serious concern, and as to make a cooperative effort toward unity of spirit?

General Queries and Advices

When these were first instituted, it was the design of the Yearly Meeting to provide a means for maintaining a general oversight of the membership pertaining to our Christian life and conduct. It remains this Yearly Meeting's heartfelt desire that good order and unity may be maintained among us.

To further this purpose, the Yearly Meeting feels that the attention of each member and attender of the Society should be drawn at regular intervals to individual self-examination. To aid the members and attenders in this

exercise, a series of both Queries and Advices is provided to impress upon the minds of us all various principles and testimonies which should guide our daily lives.

Queries for the State of the Yearly Meeting

The following Queries are directed to be read, pondered, and answered once in the year in each Monthly and Quarterly Meeting, in an order and distribution which is deliberate and unhurried. Answers to the Queries are to be forwarded to each Quarterly Meeting, where these Queries and answers from each Monthly Meeting are to be read, and a summary report approved. The Quarterly Meeting Clerk then collects these summary reports throughout the year, and forwards the entire group to the Yearly Meeting, to be read, summarised, and approved at Yearly Meeting.

1. Do you “walk in love as Christ also hath loved us”? Do you cherish the spirit of understanding and forgiveness to which he calls us?
2. As disciples of Jesus, what do you do to awaken in men a realisation of God’s kingdom? Are you, in your daily lives, obedient to God’s call wherever it may lead you? Do you maintain a steadfast loyalty to Jesus as head of the church?
3. Do you make a place in your daily life, and throughout the week with the members and attenders of your meeting, for the study of the Bible, for meditation, and for waiting upon God in prayer, that you may know more of the presence and guidance of the Holy Spirit? Do you remember the need to pray for others, holding them in the presence of God?
4. Do you come punctually and regularly to meeting for worship, with heart and mind prepared? Do you seek to know a waiting worship and communion with the Holy Spirit, and a free gospel ministry? Are you sensitive to one another’s needs and to God’s promptings, whether your response be in silence or through the spoken word?

5. Are your meetings for church affairs held in the spirit of worship and dependence upon the guidance of God? Do you attend them regularly so that the burden does not rest on a few? Do you maintain your respect for others as persons however strongly you may differ from their opinions? Do you refrain from using hurtful and provocative language? Are you sufficiently conversant with our Book of Christian Discipline to be able, when difficult questions arise, to consider them with an informed mind as well as a loving and tender spirit?

6. What is the religious state of your meeting? Do you watch over the children, young people, and adults in your meeting, desiring that they may show evidence of true conversion of heart through repentance of sin towards their Heavenly Father? Do you desire that they may grow in the knowledge of their Heavenly Father, and in devotion to Jesus Christ? Do you seek to promote their full development in body, mind, and spirit? Do you help in providing opportunities for religious teaching from the Bible? Do you make a place for each one in the life and activities of the meeting?

7. Do you choose what is simple, useful, and recyclable, in your style of living - in your dress, in your décor and electrical goods of your home, and in your car? Do you remember that God's good gifts are for all to enjoy, and do you learn to use them wisely?

8. Do you cherish your body as a temple of God's spirit, and do you seek to attain a high level of mental and physical health? Do you limit your use of alcohol or refrain from using it altogether, and do you refrain from using altogether - cigarettes, tobacco, and illicit drugs?

9. Are you honest and truthful in word and deed? Do you maintain strict integrity in your business transactions and in your relations with individuals and organizations? Are you personally scrupulous and responsible in the use of money and property entrusted to you for whatever purpose? Are you careful not to defraud the public revenue?

10. Do you regard your possessions as given to you in trust by God and do you part with them freely for the needs of others? Do you give a right proportion of your money to support the work of the Society?

11. Are you concerned that man's increasing power over nature, should not be used irresponsibly, but with reverence for life and with a sense of the splendour of God's continuing creation?

12. Are you working towards the removal of social and economic injustices? Have you attempted to examine their causes objectively, and are you ready to abandon old prejudices and think again? Do you, as disciples of Christ, take a living interest in the conditions of the district and country in which you live? Do you seek to promote the welfare of those in any kind of need, and a just distribution of the resources of the world?

13. Do you faithfully maintain our witness against all war, and all preparation for it, as inconsistent with the spirit and teaching of Christ? Do you live in the virtue of that life and power that takes away the occasion of all strife and wars? Are you always ready, with God's help, to work for reconciliation between individuals, groups, and nations?

14. Do you, as members of a Society within the world-wide Christian church, try to share in the life and fellowship of the whole Christian community? Do you co-operate as fully as possible in its work, availing yourselves of local, national, and international opportunities for worship and service with your fellow-Christians? Is your distinctive Quaker witness characterized by humility and a willingness to learn from others, so that differences are transcended in a common loyalty to Jesus Christ?

15. Do you, as disciples of Christ, seek to keep your mind open to people of other world faiths? Are you willing to learn new insights from all of them as persons? Do you seek to promote positive dialogue and greater understanding, between other Christians and people of other religions, in which the essential differences in their experience and understanding of

God, the expectations of their followers, and the outcomes at their Inter-faith conferences, are greatly respected by all those present at the time?

Queries for Individuals

The Queries for Individuals are provided for the earnest consideration of our members and attenders - for reading, pondering, and answering privately at home. It is our firm belief that spiritual watchfulness will guide us to right orthodox Christian doctrine. The corporate Quaker witness on behalf of our Quaker testimonies depends upon our individual spiritual growth in grace, and of our service to God.

1. Do you cherish that of God within you, that his love and power may grow in you and rule your life?
2. Do you seek to follow Jesus, who shows us the Father, and is himself the Way?
3. Is your religion rooted in personal experience of God? How does it find expression in your life?
4. Do you try to make your home a place of friendliness, refreshment, and peace, where God becomes more real to all who live there and to those who visit it?
5. Do those of you who are parents or guardians seek to share your deepest beliefs with your children, while leaving them free to develop as the Spirit of God may lead them?
6. Are you striving to develop your mental powers, and to use them to the glory of God? Are you loyal to Gospel truth; and do you keep your mind open to new light, from whatever quarter it may arise? Are you giving time and thought to the study of the Bible, Christian writings which reveal the ways of God, and other Spiritually helpful writings? Do you recognize the spiritual contribution made by other Christian Denominations and World Faiths?

7. Are you patient and considerate, even towards those whom you find it hard to like and those who seem to you unloving or ungrateful? Do you avoid and discourage swearing, hurtful criticism, and unkind gossip? Are you careful to avoid damaging the reputation of others? Do you respect that of God in each one, though it may be expressed in unfamiliar ways or may be difficult to discern?

8. When your life brings weariness or frustration, do you draw patience and encouragement from the way in which Jesus met these experiences? When you find fulfillment, do you remember to give thanks to the Father?

9. Do you carry through faithfully all the responsibilities entrusted to you? Are you conscientious in your daily work? Do you dwell too much on the hope of recognition or reward? When pressure is put upon you to lower your standards, are you prepared to resist it?

10. Do any of your interests, important though they may appear to you, unduly absorb your time and energy to the hindrance of your growth in grace and of your service to God?

11. Do you depend upon the guidance of God when searching for the truth of a matter, and especially in times of difficulty and suffering?

12. Do you behave with brotherly love to all men whatever their sex, race, sexuality, or religion? Do you try to make the stranger feel at home among you?

Advices

We believe the custom of regularly reading aloud well-chosen Advices has been of value to our members and attenders in stimulating their spiritual life. It is directed that each of the following Advices be read in our Meetings, at least once in the year, according to a regular plan, and that the time for reading them be chosen to benefit as many of the members and attenders as possible.

A suggested plan follows: Arrange for someone to read aloud one of the Advices weekly at the close of First-Day Meeting for Worship, followed by some minutes of silence in which to consider it. This would allow for the reading of each Advice twice in the year.

I

1. Take heed, dear Friends, to the promptings of love and truth in your hearts, which are the leadings of God. Resist not his strivings within you. It is his light that shows us our darkness and leads to true repentance. The love of God draws us to him, a redemptive love shown forth by Jesus Christ in his life, on the cross at Calvary, and through his bodily resurrection. He is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. As his disciples, we are called to live in the life and power of the Holy Spirit.

2. Seek to know one another in the things which are eternal. Live in love as Christian brethren, entering with sympathy into the joys and sorrows of each other's daily lives. Be ready to give help, and to accept it. Bear the burden of each other's failings and pray for one another.

3. Be constant in the private reading of the Bible and other Christian writings which reveal the ways of God. Seek to know an inward retirement, even amid the activities of daily life. Make a quiet place wherein you may learn more of the meaning of prayer and the gladness of communion with God our Father. Encourage in your family and meeting life the habit of dependence upon God's guidance and on his help for each day's needs. Treasure the opportunity on a Sunday for corporate worship - vocal prayer and Bible study, congregational singing, and waiting worship. Throughout the week think prayerfully of your meeting and its members and attenders.

II

4. In worship, in meeting for worship, we enter with reverence into communion with God, surrendering our whole being to our Heavenly

Father and to his purpose. Worship becomes sacramental as we receive the spirit of the living Christ in our midst, and offer ourselves to his service. Come with heart and mind prepared. Pray silently as you gather together that you may all be drawn into the spirit of adoration and communion with God, in which fellowship with him and with one another becomes real. Yield yourselves and all your outward concerns to God's guidance, that you may find the evil weakening in you and the good raised up.

5. Remember that to everyone is given a share of responsibility for the meeting for worship, whether that service be in silence or through the spoken word. Do not assume that vocal ministry is never to be your part. If the call to speak comes, do not let the sense of your own unworthiness, or the fear of being unable to find the right words, prevent you from being obedient to the leading of the Spirit. Ask wisdom of God that you may be sure of your guidance and be enabled humbly to discern and impart something of his glory and truth. Pray that your ministry may rise from the place of deep experience, and that you may be restrained from unnecessary and superficial words. Faithfulness and sincerity in speaking, even very briefly, may open the way to further ministry from others. Try to speak audibly and distinctly, with sensitivity to the needs of your fellow worshippers. Wait to be sure of the right moment for giving the message. Avoid speaking too often, too predictably, or too soon after another person has spoken. Beware of making additions towards the end of a meeting when it was well left before.

6. Go regularly to meeting for worship when you are tired, discouraged, or angry. Pray for God's guidance and help. Try to find a spiritual wholeness which encompasses suffering as well as thankfulness and joy. Let worship of God strengthen your whole life.

7. The spirit of prayer will be active in the truly gathered group. Vocal prayer may wonderfully draw those present into communion with God and with one another, though it may be expressed in hesitant and imperfect words. In a difficult or divided meeting, prayer may bring

healing and unity as nothing else can. Prayer should spring from a deep place in the heart; let it be offered with reverence.

8. Receive the vocal ministry of others in a tender and understanding spirit and avoid hurtful criticism. As servants of the same Lord, with diversities of spiritual gifts, receive and give faithfully in the service of Gospel truth, remembering that ministry which to one may seem to have little value, to another may be a direct word from God.

9. Be faithful; be patient; be in earnest to fulfil your service as messengers of Gospel truth. Feel the power of God in one another, drawing you together as he draws you to himself.

III

10. Watch with Christian tenderness over the opening minds of your children. Seek to awaken in them the love of Jesus Christ and an understanding of his teaching. Uphold in your own conduct, and thus encourage in theirs, truthfulness, sincerity, and self-discipline. Through example and training help them to recognise and obey the voice of God in their hearts that they may be joyful and willing in his service. Remember, at the same time, that there is a unique potentiality in each human being as a child of God, and that the Holy Spirit may lead your children along paths which you have not foreseen.

11. Choose recreations that do not conflict with your service to God and man, and in that service, be willing to lay them aside. Be discriminating in the use of radio, television, the internet, and other means of information, persuasion, and entertainment. Give thought to the right use of Sunday with its special opportunities for both service and leisure.

12. Seek for yourselves and for your children that full development of God's gifts which is true education. Realise that it should be continued throughout life and that its privileges should be shared by all. Seek to increase your knowledge of the Bible. Study the Scriptures intelligently,

using the help available from modern sources. Be careful not to misquote or misapply the Scriptures. Make every effort to understand the Christian faith. Be ready at all times to receive fresh light from whatever quarter it may come; approach new theories with discernment. Remember our testimony that Christianity is not a notion but a way.

13. Throughout life, rejoice in the power and beauty of those friendships which grow in depth, understanding and a mutual respect. At all times love and value “that of God” in your friend. No relationship can be a right one which makes use of another person through selfish desire.

14. In looking forward to the long-term comradeship of marriage, remember that happiness depends on an understanding and imaginative love on both sides. Seek to be joined in a common discipleship of Jesus Christ, desiring that your union may be owned and blessed by him. Consider together the responsibilities of parenthood. Remember the guidance and help which you may draw from older and more experienced people, including your parents. Ask God’s guidance continually; and when difficulties arise remind yourselves of the value of prayer, of perseverance, and of a sense of humour.

15. If you undergo the distress of separation or divorce, try to maintain some communication with your partner, that arrangements may be made with minimal bitterness. Where children and young people are involved in a situation, seek to consider their desires and feelings, and their need for stability and love. Remember to make good arrangements, between you and your partner, and for your dependents, before you end your relationship.

16. Each stage of our lives offers its own fresh opportunities. Face with courage the approach of old age, both for yourselves and for those dear to you, realising that it may bring wisdom, serenity and detachment. As far as possible make arrangements in good time which will avoid laying an undue burden on others. Dwell with thankfulness on the blessings and happiness that life has brought you. Try throughout life to discern the right

moment to relinquish responsibilities which should pass to those younger than yourselves. As outward activity lessens, your thought and prayer may liberate love and power in others.

IV

17. Bring the whole of your daily life under the ordering of the spirit of Christ. Live adventurously. In every situation seek to be aware of the presence of God, praying that spiritual power in yourself and in others may be released for the furtherance of God's kingdom. Life brings conflicting responsibilities and choices at certain times. To one, the summons may come to apply himself with fresh energy and vision to his present work; to another, to make a complete change, perhaps even to retire early or to limit his engagements, so that he may be free for new service of God's appointing. When you have a choice of employment and/or education, choose that which gives the fullest opportunity for the use of your talents in the service of God and your fellow-men.

18. In your relations with others, exercise imagination, understanding, and sympathy. Listen patiently, and seek whatever truth other people's opinions may contain for you. Think it possible that you may be mistaken. In discussion, avoid hurtful and provocative language; do not allow the strength of your convictions to betray you into making statements or allegations that are unfair or untrue.

19. Remember that no one can live to himself alone; and be ready to seek counsel and help from one another. Let not failure discourage you. When tempted by the Devil to do wrong, or to despair, call upon God for help, confessing to him your weakness and your need.

20. Remember your responsibility as citizens for the government of your own village, town or city, 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 greed, exploitation, waste, injustice, oppression, discrimination, and slavery; and

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 to the full, and will foster their desire to serve other people.

21. The freedom of the kingdom of God involves membership one of another and responsibility towards God and man. Check in yourselves and discourage in others those tendencies which lead to gambling, commercial speculation, and unethical investment. Remember how widespread is the temptation to grow wealthy at the expense of others, and how apparently harmless indulgence often leads by degrees to ruin and crime. Do not, out of the spirit of unwise thinking or emulation, buy what you do not need or cannot afford; especially on your eftpos, debit, or credit card, or through the offer of easy hire purchase terms; and do nothing to encourage others in these practices. If you get into debt in your life, remember to seek the guidance and help of the staff at your local budget advisory service. In view of the evils arising from the unwise use of mood-altering and habit-forming substances, consider how far you should limit your use of alcohol or whether you should refrain from using it altogether, and whether you should refrain from using altogether, cigarettes, tobacco, and illicit drugs. Do not let the claims of good fellowship, or the fear of seeming peculiar, influence your decision. All users of the road should constantly remember that danger can arise from lack of patience and courtesy, and that any use of alcohol or drugs impairs alertness and so may imperil the lives of others.

22. Remember that you must give an account to God and man for your mode of acquiring, as well as for your manner of using, and finally your disposing of your possessions in an unwise way. Endeavour to keep yourselves free from the burden of unnecessary possessions. Seek to avoid waste in your daily lives each week. Do not let the prevailing culture and present media dictate your needs and wants.

23. Taking oaths implies a double standard of truthfulness, contrary to the teaching of Jesus Christ. In choosing to make a verbal affirmation, instead of swearing on the Bible, be aware of the claim to integrity that you make

in the presence of others. Remember that sincerity and truthfulness should be practiced in all areas of your life.

24. Be faithful in maintaining our witness against all war as inconsistent with the spirit and teaching of Christ. Seek, through his power and grace, to overcome in your own hearts the emotions which lie at the root of conflict. In industrial strife, racial enmity, religious, political and international tension, stand firmly by Christian principles, seeking to foster understanding between individuals, groups, and nations.

25. As members of the world-wide church of Christ, try to strengthen its witness at home and abroad. The basis of Christian unity lies in a common commitment to the leadings of Christ's spirit. While remaining faithful to our Quaker insights, seek to understand the contributions to Christian thought and action made by other branches of the church. In your own localities, seek to enter into fellowship, prayer and work with your fellow-Christians.

26. Seek, as disciples of Christ, to understand the beliefs and practices of people of other world faiths, and who belong to different religious groups. Be open to the new insights that they may bring to us. Be cautious of accepting new ideas and practices that are contrary to our Quaker testimonies. At home and abroad, work with others of different religions to pursue commonly shared projects for the good of all human beings.

27. Use your abilities and possessions not as ends in themselves but as God's gifts entrusted to you. Share them with others under God's guidance and to his glory. Use them in humility and with courtesy. Guard against the love of power; be considerate of the needs of others and respect their personalities. Show a loving consideration for all God's creatures. Cherish the beauty and variety of his world.

“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 Christ's 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 in the letter, for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.”

Postscript to an epistle concerning Quaker Advices to, “The Brethren in the North” issued by a General Meeting of Elders and Brethren at Balby, Yorkshire, in the Ninth month, 1656.

Queries for Ministry, Eldership, and Oversight

The following Queries are recommended to be read aloud in each of the Monthly Meetings for Ministry, Eldership, and Oversight. They are to be read, pondered, and answered in an order and distribution throughout the year as suitable to each Monthly Meeting, and suitable answers prepared to be sent to the Quarterly Meeting. The clerk of the Quarterly Meeting is to prepare summaries of these answers for its records, and the summaries prepared in the Quarterly Meeting for Ministry, Eldership, and Oversight just preceding the Yearly Meeting shall be forwarded to the Yearly Meeting for Ministry, Eldership, and Oversight to be read, summarised and approved at Yearly Meeting.

1. Are your members and attenders of your meeting punctual and regular in attendance of all your meetings? Is there evidence of spiritual growth in your meetings for worship?
2. Do you promote the spiritual growth of your membership through the Christian ministry of your meetings, building each person up in the faith that is in Jesus Christ? Are you taking care to see that the basic principles of Quaker worship are kept clearly before your members and attenders?
3. Do you practice Christ’s way of life, and tell others about him? Are you good examples in simplicity, moderation, and uprightness in your daily lives? Do you have an individual and deep concern for the spread of the Gospel among all people? Do you encourage a sense of religious responsibility among the members and attenders of your meeting?

4. Do you give sufficient thought and time to the spiritual awakening of the young people in your meetings? Are you concerned for helping them develop and consecrate their various talents to God? Do you make an effort to provide opportunity for the Christian exercise of their gifts in the Quaker meeting and in the local community?

Advices for Ministry, Eldership, and Oversight

It is desired that the following Advices be read and pondered in each of our Monthly Meetings for Ministry, Eldership, and Oversight at least once during the year. While the purpose of each Advice is primarily intended as a private reminder for each individual member, occasionally a way may open for some helpful comments to be made in a spirit of brotherly love from other Friends.

1. Do not forget, that to every one of you, is given a share of responsibility for the meeting for worship and for the vocal ministry in your meetings, whether your part be in silence or through the spoken word.

2. As disciples of Christ, in your daily lives, be always constant in your endeavours, through the power of God, to live under the ordering of the spirit of Christ.

3. Be frequent in reading, and diligent in meditating upon the Bible. Always be careful not to misquote or misapply the Holy Scriptures. In conversing, writing, or preaching about the things of God, seek to be clear in doctrine, and respect the words used in the Scriptures.

4. Be careful to live as disciples of Christ in all things. Keep yourselves untainted from the world, and seek to be examples of meekness, patience, and charity.

5. Be watchful not to become entangled with the cares of the world; and guard against the snare of accumulating excessive wealth. As disciples of Christ, seek to always manifest Christian moderation and contentment in all things.

6. Cherish a religious interest on behalf of those who speak in the vocal ministry. Watch with Christian concern, over the young and inexperienced members and attenders of your meeting, and seek to encourage all in the right way of the Lord.

7. In the exercise of your ministry, seek to wait for the renewed putting forth of the Holy Spirit. Be careful not to exceed the measure of your spiritual gift, but proceed and conclude in God.

8. Be not preachers of yourselves, but of Jesus Christ the Lord. Reverently ask wisdom of God, that you may be enabled to correctly interpret the Bible. Do not let anything be done or offered with a view to popularity, but in all things show humility, and the fear of the Lord.

9. Bear in mind that you are merely God's instruments, and beware of laying too much stress on your ministry. Trust that the baptising power of the Spirit of God may accompany your words, and thus be the true evidence of them all.

10. Avoid damaging the reputation of other Friends, and do not hurt one another's service to God. As servants of the same Lord, with diversities of spiritual gifts, but the same Holy Spirit, seek to maintain a lively exercise in harmony with the spreading of the gospel of Christ.

11. Let all ministers endeavour to express themselves audibly and distinctly, and guard against all tones and gestures inconsistent with Christian simplicity. Let each one beware of using unnecessary preambles, and of making unneeded additions towards the conclusion of the meeting.

12. When travelling in the service of Christ, seek to carefully move under his guidance. Let your visits be neither short and hurried, or burdensome and unnecessarily expensive. Do not be offended in anything, that your ministry does not become blamed by others.

13. Prayer and thanksgiving to God are important parts of worship, in meeting for worship. May they be offered in spirit and in truth, and with a right understanding, and be seasoned with grace. When engaged therein, avoid using many repetitive words, and be cautious of too often repeating the name of God. Do not let prayer be offered in a formal and customary way, or without a reverent sense of God's influence.

14. Finally, Take heed, dear Friends, to the flock of God amongst whom you have been called to labour. Be faithful; be patient; be in earnest to fulfil your appointed service, that when the Chief Shepherd, Jesus Christ, shall appear, you will receive the crown of glory that will not fade away.

Marriage

We earnestly advise and exhort Friends to wait upon the Lord for counsel and guidance before starting any procedure for marriage. The union of a couple is not to be undertaken lightly.

Friends regard marriage as a continuing religious sacrament, not merely a civil contract. We believe that marriage is an ordinance of God, appointed for the help and blessing of both partners and for the right upbringing of the next generation. Divorce and broken homes are a blight to our country, and great care needs to be exercised that the union be on the right foundation. Even when the marriage relationship fails to achieve its highest possibilities and unhappiness develops, we believe that by patient and prayerful determination these obstacles may be overcome. Overseers should be aware of sources of outside counselling that are available, have the Meeting's permission to recommend the use of Christian counsellors, and be sensitive to the time to make these recommendations to married couples who may need help.

A well-founded marriage is a source of strength, security, and joy, not only to the couple and their family, but to the local community and to all whom their lives touch.

True happiness and joy in marriage depends first on the presence of devoted love, a love which is not the outcome merely of a passing attraction, but which includes a real respect for the personality of the other person.

Every such union should be undertaken in the fear of the Lord and with a reverent attention to his counsel and guidance. It will be owned and blessed by him if the love that draws two souls together is sanctified by the larger love of Christ. Of utmost importance is a common faith in God, and a mutual desire to open heart and home to the spirit of Christ.

The Friends' marriage ceremony reflects our belief that the marriage contract is made by the couple themselves, blessed and completed by God. The simple Friends' wedding where the two concerned say their vows within the framework of a meeting for worship, without the help of a third person, is the natural expression of a way of life in which we believe. In the presence of God and with the support and prayers of their friends, they take each other as long-term partners, asking his blessing on their union and dedicating their new life to his service.

Procedure for Marriage

In order to do all that it can to assure the stability and happiness of couples who are married under its care, the Yearly Meeting outlines the following procedure preliminary to the wedding.

The couple presents a letter, signed by both of them, to the Monthly Meeting under whose care they wish to be married, stating that they intend marriage with each other. This letter is minuted by the clerk, and a group of Friends is appointed.

Today, such a group of Friends should be concerned to do what they can to help the couple achieve a stable and happy marriage. They should endeavour to give any counsel which the couple may need. Acceptance of Christian counsel should be a prerequisite for marriage under the care of the Meeting. It is recommended that a small collection of books and

pamphlets on marriage be made available and kept up to date for the use of couples contemplating marriage.

The month following their initial letter of intention, the couple presents a three letters to the Meeting, the first letter stating that they continue their intentions of marriage, and suggesting a time for the wedding, the second and third letters giving consent from the parents of both parties. A Monthly Meeting may permit a marriage to take place without parents' consent if it feels that their objection is unreasonable.

If everything is in order, the Monthly Meeting asks the group of Friends to have oversight of the wedding and appoints the Meeting in which the marriage is to take place, preferably on a weekday. The group of Friends should meet with the couple to discuss plans for the wedding and reception, which should be carried out with dignity, reverence, and simplicity.

The group of Friends, in conjunction with the clerk of the Monthly Meeting, also has the responsibility of informing itself as to the legal requirements for marriage, and of seeing to it that the couple is aware of them and that they are carried out in adequate time.

After the wedding, the group of Friends has the marriage certificate recorded by the recorder of the Monthly Meeting, sees that the legal report is sent to the local and national officials, and reports to the Monthly Meeting on carrying out its duties.

If either of the couple, has children by a previous marriage, the group of Friends should see that their legal rights are secured.

If the couple are members of the same Meeting, the procedure is, of course, somewhat simplified. If one is not a member of Friends, the marriage may be under the care of the Meeting to which the member belongs. If for good reason the couple wish to be married in a different

Meeting, the group of Friends should forward their certificates to the clerk of the Meeting which is to have charge of the wedding.

The marriage itself, as stated before, takes place in a meeting for worship, in which the couple rise, usually toward the close of the Meeting, take each other by the hand, and repeat the following promise: "In the presence of the Lord, 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, so long as we both shall live."

The marriage certificate is then signed, by both parties, and is read aloud by a person selected beforehand. At the close of the Meeting all persons present are invited to sign the certificate as witnesses.

The form of the certificate in essence is as follows:

Whereas, A. B. of _____, in the Province of _____, in _____, son/daughter of C. B., of _____, and H., his wife; and D. E., daughter/son of F. E., of _____, and N., his wife, having declared their intentions of marriage with each other to _____ Monthly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends held at _____, according to the good order used among them, and having the consent of parents (or guardians), their proposed marriage was allowed by that meeting. These are to certify to whom it may concern, that for the accomplishment of their intention, this _____ day of the _____ Month, in the year of our Lord _____, they, A. B. and D. E., appearing in a Public Meeting for worship of the Religious Society of Friends, held at _____, and A. B., taking D. E. by the hand, did on this solemn occasion declare that he/she took her/him, D. E., to be his/her wife/husband, promising, with Divine assistance, to be unto her/him a loving and faithful husband/wife so long as they both shall live. And then in the same assembly, D. E. did in like manner declare that she/he took him/her, A. B., to be her/his husband/wife, promising with

Divine assistance, to be unto him/her a loving and faithful wife/husband so long as they both shall live. And moreover, they, A. B. and D. E., she/he according to the custom of marriage adopting the surname of her/his husband/wife, did, as a further confirmation thereof, then and there to these presents, set their hands. A. B. D. B. And we, having been present at the marriage, have as witnesses set our hands the day and year above written.

Signed:

Marriage Outside the Care of the Meeting

If a member is married outside the care of the Meeting, the overseers should either visit or correspond with the newly married couple, expressing the interest of the Meeting in their new life. It is our desire and hope that the member will continue his relationship with the Society and that the non-member should be made welcome and invited to attend Meeting.

Additional Counsel

We feel it wise that a member should not remarry sooner than a year after the death of a former husband or wife. An interval of time is necessary for a person to readjust his life and to seek guidance for its direction.

Since all prior wills are automatically and profoundly affected by marriage and/or parenthood, we have thought it well to call attention here to some important advice on wills, given at the end of this book.

Note: Groups of Friends for the oversight of marriages are urged to contact local and national officials well ahead of the time of the wedding in order to assure that both the local and national officials and the Friends

involved are familiar with the relevant statutes and are prepared to work within them. Friends should be aware that allowance is made in the statutes of our country, for marriages under the care of Friends without the officiation of a person legally registered to perform marriages.

Wills

It is recommended that Friends make wills in order to prevent the inconvenience, loss and trouble to their beneficiaries of dying intestate; that they make their wills under professional advice in time of health and sound judgment, and dispose of their estates as a proper stewardship dictates. We counsel that none postpone this duty to a time of illness or emergency. Making his will in due time can shorten no man's days, but omission and delay have proved very injurious to many people.

Friends are reminded that marriage revokes a will previously made, and that after marriage a new will should be made without delay, and are urged to keep in mind the need for revising their wills from time to time as circumstances change.

Friends are admonished to regard the possession of property as a stewardship, valuable for proper use, but liable to abuse; remembering that all possessory rights are constantly subject to change through law. Property and its possession involve power. Modern ideals of social responsibility require that such power be administered under a sense of social concern. Even modest wealth requires watchfulness in its proper application.

Funerals

Two or more suitable Friends of each particular Meeting should be appointed by Monthly Meetings to extend their sympathy in case of death, to offer assistance in regard to funeral arrangements and to be in attendance at funeral services.

Friends are urged to conform to true simplicity in all funeral arrangements. The simplicity of a meeting for worship is desired in the

conduct of funerals. They should be occasions when things temporal are secondary, when the reality of life immortal is deeply felt, and when the presence of our Lord brings hope, comfort, and consolation to the bereaved.

The group of Friends overseeing the funeral is to see that the records of interment are accurately kept. Graves should be marked by low, medium or high, plain or decorative stones, giving the name of the deceased and appropriate dates.

Memorials

"Lives of great men all remind us,

We can make our lives sublime,

And departing, leave behind us,

Footprints on the sands of time."

Thus wrote the poet Longfellow, and we believe that suitable accounts of our members and attenders who have lived exemplary spiritual lives may be an inspiration to those who follow after. If, therefore, any Meeting should feel that it would be profitable to prepare a memorial concerning a deceased member, such memorial is to be sent to Meeting for Sufferings for approval and printing instructions.

Education

The very important subject of education of our young people in piety and virtue, as well as in intellectual pursuits, has engaged the attention of the Yearly Meeting. Friends believe in the sacramental quality of the whole of life. All life should be an education; all education should have religious significance. The deepest aim of Quaker education should be to cultivate an attentive ear and a habit of quick response to God's leading within each individual member or attender. We are concerned to encourage the schools which our children attend to maintain a high standard of moral

character and Christian principles as well as academic excellence. Schools have an opportunity to include in their curriculum some instruction in Christian beliefs and principles, as well as to create a wholesome and Christian atmosphere in which our young people may grow. Teachers should be employed who are concerned not only to follow Christian ideals, but who can also instill in the pupils a desire to be guided by Christ in all phases of life. All of our meetings will want to foster First-Day Schools with teachers and leaders who serve voluntarily. The basic aim of these classes is to give each individual member or attender spiritual nourishment, and to lead him in a growing knowledge of the Bible. Although we must be watchful to provide religious training in our homes, and First-Day Schools, we must ever keep in mind that attendance at meetings where Friends come close to God and to each other is an essential part of religious training. Conditions all over the world are changing constantly and create problems which need our prayerful consideration. Conferences, forums, and discussion groups are sometimes helpful in appraising these problems. It is important that we understand them in their relation to the will of God for us.

Recreation

Recreation is important for a creative and full life. It should be a time of both mental and physical refreshment. However, we must be careful to choose what is wholesome and uplifting, and avoid things that are wasteful of time and money and that tend to draw us away from the true aim and purpose in life. If we are wholly dedicated to a God-filled life, we will endeavour to please him both in our work and in our recreation.

Capital Punishment

Our opposition to capital punishment is based on the command of Christ to love and not to kill, and on the belief that there is that of God in every man. We believe in the value of every human life, and that even the most unfortunate sinner may be reclaimed and brought to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ.

We feel that a considerate and Christian treatment of all offenders is always possible. We urge Friends to work for the complete abolition of the death penalty.

Oaths

Our testimony against the use of oaths is founded upon the following positive command of Jesus Christ: "But I say to you, do not swear at all: neither by Heaven, for it is God's throne; nor by the Earth, for it is his footstool; nor by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. Nor shall you swear by your head, because you cannot make one hair white or black. But let your 'Yes' be 'Yes,' and your 'No,' 'No.' For whatever is more than these is from the Evil One" (Matthew 5:34-37).

We regard the taking of oaths as contrary to the teachings of Christ, and as setting up a double standard of truthfulness, whereas sincerity and truth should be practised in every phase of life.

Friends' opposition to judicial oaths is not merely a negation; it is a positive affirmation of an ideal of sincerity for the regulation of life. For an honest person to "swear" or to declare "under penalties of perjury" (which means as if one had sworn) adds nothing to the credibility of his statement, but puts him under judgment for disobedience to Christ's command not to swear. For a dishonest person to "swear" or to declare "under penalties of perjury" offers no assurance of honesty in the present instance, since he has in the past risked judgment by disobeying Christ's command to be honest in all things.

When asked to swear to, or to affirm, the honesty of a statement, a Friend might simply answer to the effect: "I love Christ's law and fear his judgment at all times, including this. He has commanded me not to swear but to always be truthful."

Simplicity

Even in times when life was less complex than it is today, Friends emphasised the importance of simplicity. The heart of Christian simplicity

lies in the singleness of purpose which is required by the injunction to seek first the kingdom of God. As men seek to express the spirit of God in their daily lives they realise the necessity of putting God's kingdom first.

Simplicity does not mean that all conform to uniform standards. Each one must determine in the light that is given him what promotes and what hinders his compelling search for the kingdom of God. The call to each is to abandon those things that clutter his life and to press toward the goal unhampered. This is true simplicity.

Early Friends refrained from using the customary names of the days of the week and months of the year since some of these were unquestionably derived from names of heathen gods.

Pertaining to dress, our principle is to let decency, simplicity, and utility be our guide. When one is truly trying to seek first the kingdom of God he will not be a slave to fashion. Since we believe our bodies are the temples of the living God, we should dress simply and modestly. As in dress, so in all our phases of living, we should each one of us strive to follow the dictates of the light of Christ within.

Another basic belief of Friends is in the equal worth of all men in the sight of God. Early Friends avoided titles of respect, tipping of the hat, and the use of the plural word "you" when addressing one person, because these customs originated from the practice of showing undue respect to those in authority and wealth.

Equality

We believe that people of all sexes, races, and sexuality are equal in God's sight. Friends feel the burden of greed, exploitation, waste, injustice, oppression, discrimination, and slavery; social and economic injustices and intolerances, and should do what we can, under God's leading, to alleviate such wrongs.

War and Peace

It has been the belief of the Society of Friends from its rise that all war is contrary to the teachings of our blessed Redeemer, Jesus Christ. In his Sermon on the Mount, he admonished us to love our enemies, to bless those who curse us, and to do good to those who hate us. Likewise, when Peter cut the servant of the high priest with his sword, our Lord said to him, "Put your sword in its place, for all who take up the sword will perish by the sword" (Matthew 26:52).

In a statement presented to King Charles II of England in 1660, early Friends declared: "The Spirit of Christ by which we are guided is not changeable, so as once to command us from a thing as evil, and again to move unto it; and we certainly do know, and testify to the world that the 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."

As we believe that all war is wrong, so we believe that all preparation or training for war is wrong. Military conscription is inconsistent with the teaching and practices of Christianity. We not only feel abhorrence for the evils of war and the suffering and misery connected with it, but we desire to work actively for peace, endeavouring to remove the social, economic, and political causes of war. We wish to emphasise the brotherhood of all men, and that unity and peace can only be achieved by the spirit of Christ working in the hearts of men.

It is our profound belief that the peoples of the world desire peace, but we do not believe that it can be achieved through a policy of military strength. Peace can only be built when men seek to solve their common problems in a spirit of reconciliation and national humility. We must act with love, forbearance and forgiveness; trusting in God's spirit working in all men.

Today when talk about defending ourselves against an enemy is very prevalent, we would encourage our members and attenders to keep in mind that the only true shelter is peace.

As members and attenders of a Society which has always been opposed to war, we must work unfailingly for peace as a Yearly Meeting as well as in our local communities, ever keeping in mind that peace must begin with ourselves in each individual heart. Jesus Christ called his disciples, and still calls us to a deep personal commitment to the way of love. It is only by the working of his spirit through us that the problems of war, hate and strife can be solved and peace brought to a troubled world.