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The Religious Society of Friends

FAITH AND PRACTICE



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London Yearly Meeting Christian Faith and Practice (1960)

Pacific Yearly Meeting: Faith and Practice (1973)

Philadelphia Yearly Meeting: Faith and Practice (Revised 1972)

* Ohio Valley Yearly Meeting is in the process of revising its book of Discipline, now referred to as *Faith and Practice*. Revisions and additions that have been approved by the Yearly Meeting are included in this electronic version. Because the revision process is not complete, there is no printed version of the book that includes the new material.

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INTRODUCTION¹

"Dearly beloved Friends, these things we do not lay upon you as a rule or form to walk by, but that all, with the measure of light which is pure and holy, may be guided: and so in the light walking and abiding, these may be fulfilled in the Spirit, not in the letter, for the letter killeth, but the Spirit giveth life."²

The Ohio Valley Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends holds as the basis of its faith the belief that divine truth and the gift of God's presence are available to all people in all ages. The indwelling presence of God implies the equal worth of all members of the human family and the capacity in all to discern spiritual truth and to hold direct communion with the Divine Spirit.

Our central shared spiritual experience is the meeting for worship. Friends seek to experience communion with the Divine and – through the Divine – with one another. No mediator, rite, or outward sacrament is a necessary condition of worship. All that is necessary is a seeking spirit on the part of the worshiper. When Friends gather in meeting for worship, we begin in silent expectancy awaiting the guidance and inspiration of the Spirit. This guidance is communicated directly to individuals and may be brought forward in vocal ministry. Through our shared experience of worship, we gain a clearer vision of God and God's will for our lives. In like manner, our meetings for business are conducted under the discipline of worship, by which we seek neither majority rule nor a secular consensus but rather a clear understanding of the will of God for that group of Friends gathered at a particular time and place.

Because we experience that the Divine lies deeper than words, we have no formal creed. Friends have used various expressions—the Light Within, the Light or Spirit of Christ, the Holy Spirit, the Word, that of God, Truth, Power, Seed, the Ground of Being and many more—to describe our experience of the Divine Life. The tapestry of our beliefs is informed by the life and teaching of Jesus of Nazareth, Christian writings, the spiritual insights of many faiths and their inspired teachers, and a sense of awe in contemplating the natural world. What binds us together as a spiritual community is not uniformity of belief, but rather our sense of a common journey on a shared path, seeking the guidance of the Light. Our diversity strengthens us as we walk this path of love, compassion, and justice.

We are called to cultivate a close relationship with the Divine Spirit through daily spiritual practices and frequent occasions of group worship. We seek the continuing revelation of God's will, and we test individual leadings and conceptions of Truth with the collective witness of Friends past and present. We endeavor to live in accord with the Quaker testimonies. These practical expressions of our faith flow from the belief that love, the manifestation of the Divine Spirit, is the most potent influence that can be applied in the affairs of life. Friends welcome into fellowship all those who sincerely try to follow the Inward Light.

LISTENING TO THE SPIRIT³

The essential purpose of a religious organization is to foster and encourage the spiritual life and to bring the human spirit into intimate relation with the Divine Spirit. Our spiritual life may and should be developed through works of righteousness and loving kindness. Religious communities also provide organized opportunities for the development of our spiritual natures and for the constant renewal of our strength at the Divine Source.

¹ Approved in OVYM Sessions, July 26, 2007

² [Postscript to the Letter from the Meeting of Elders at Balby, near Doncaster, 1656, the earliest advice on Christian practice issued by any general body of Friends]

³ Approved in OVYM Sessions, July 28, 2016

Meeting for Worship

Waiting Worship

The basis of meeting for worship is silent and direct communion with God. It provides an opportunity to step together into the holy stream of reality which is the unchangeable and eternal living Christ, making it a time of expectant waiting for the leading of the Divine Spirit.

Gathering in an outward silence is not enough. Each individual must consciously and earnestly seek in humble reverence for a renewed sense of the inward power of the Spirit. From the depths of that stillness comes the consciousness of the presence of God. In this experience individuals will not only find direction for their lives and strength for their needs but will also feel an urge to share with others the openings that have come to them. As the worshippers seek to be led to deeper understanding and pray to become more obedient to the Christ within, their shared communion with the Divine will release to all in the meeting the riches of the Spirit.

True worship, whether vocal or silent, is offering ourselves—body, mind, and soul—to do God’s will. During the silent waiting, the flow of the Divine Spirit from heart to heart is often felt. Worshippers should gather in a spirit of silent prayer with a willingness to give, as well as to receive, so that the full possibilities of the meeting hour can be reached and its influence extended throughout the community from week to week.

Vocal Ministry

The Society of Friends believes that vocal ministry in the meeting for worship should arise out of a personal call to service. Such a call may be divinely inspired revelation of truth or the sense of a need in the meeting. Our conviction is that the Spirit of God is in all and that vocal utterance comes when this Spirit works within us. As we listen for God’s counsel we become willing messengers; as we receive the insurging power of divine love, we are consecrated to the service of God. Therefore we do not set anyone apart to supply the spoken word in our meetings. The varying needs of a meeting can best be supplied by different personalities, and a meeting is enriched by the sharing of any living experience of God. The responsibility rests upon every member to be ready and willing to take part in the vocal service under a due sense of divine prompting.

The call to speak is a normal experience. It may come to any earnest seeker for divine help and is recognized by a persistent inner urge to share religious experience or aspiration. Those who are timid or unaccustomed to speak should have faith that God will strengthen them to speak their messages. Experienced speakers should be watchful not to speak at undue length. It is helpful to have a period of silence between vocal expressions.

Children are a spiritual part of the meeting and there should be consideration of ministry suited to their understanding and needs.

Preparation for Worship and Ministry

Frequent periods of private retirement, meditation, reading the Bible or other inspirational texts, prayer, and appreciation of beauty and nature are recommended as preparation for the meeting hour. To awaken and sustain the spirit of worship, both teaching and prophetic vocal ministry are valuable. Spiritual sensitivity must always be the first requirement for this ministry. Constant openness to be guided by the Inward Light and a commitment to live with integrity are preparation for ministry, as are thoughtful meditation on the importance of this opportunity and a sincere dedication to the purposes of God.

MEETINGS FOR BUSINESS

The Society of Friends is a religious fellowship based on common religious ideals and experiences rather than on common creed or liturgy of worship.

Although each person must follow his or her own leading as to truth and duty as the final authority, experience has demonstrated that in the united worship and activities of a united group, spiritual discernment is sharpened by the stimulus, counsel and judgment of all, so that the final knowledge or decision of the group is usually superior to that of the individual.

Since Friends hold the belief that God's Presence and guidance are given to all seekers, it behooves them in their meetings to hear with attentive and tolerant minds the messages and views of all members present. This is applicable no less in Meetings for Business than in Meetings for Worship.

General Business Procedure

The Society of Friends believes that right and satisfactory decision is dependent upon spiritual discernment. Therefore it transacts its business by united decision under divine guidance, rather than by divisive majority vote, striving to reach its conclusions in a spirit of reasonableness and forbearance.

For the furtherance of this purpose the method is as follows: When a matter requiring decision is placed before the meeting, either by the clerk or by another member, time should be permitted for careful and deliberate consideration. All members who feel concerned to express a judgment or to present any helpful viewpoint should be heard. When it appears to the clerk that the meeting has reached a judgment based on mutual consideration of various views, the clerk should compose a minute and ask whether it truly represents the judgment of the meeting. The approved form of the minute shall be written by the recording clerk and become part of the permanent record of the meeting, and it should be accepted by the members as final unless called up for reconsideration.

It is the privilege of any member to offer a substitute for the clerk's minute if so desired, and the meeting may concur in, modify or reject it, in exactly the same manner as if the minute had been submitted by the clerk. In order to arrive at a decision when those present hold different views, all are cautioned to seek for divine guidance, to exercise mutual forbearance and, having expressed their views, to refrain from unduly pressing them when the judgment of the meeting is obviously inclined to some other view.

In order not to delay or obstruct the transaction of business, the clerk should make a minute when the meeting seems generally united.

When a meeting cannot unite upon a minute, the old policy remains unchanged or the new business is not taken up as the case may be, and the subject is dropped for the time being to allow more careful deliberation.

This method of procedure has been satisfactorily followed by Friends since the organization of the Society. It has its basis in a deep-seated conviction that religious men and women should come to decisions in a spirit of unity. It is more than a plan of procedure; it is an expression of something fundamental in the attitude of a Friend in meeting other Friends in a business relationship. Proven by experience to be both effective and satisfactory, its use is commended to Friends in conducting both business meetings and committee meetings.

Worship Sharing

Worship sharing is an opportunity for a group of Friends to focus on a particular question under divine guidance. This may be an especially troubling issue within a meeting or a query inviting personal reflection. It can be helpful in a variety of situations when we need a chance to share with each other more deeply with each other than we would in ordinary conversation. Worship sharing opens a sacred space, where we can take down our usual defenses and encounter each other in "that which is eternal." In that place, we are mindful of the personal nature of the sharing and do not repeat outside the session things that are meant only for that particular time.

We come to meeting for worship open to speaking or not speaking, as we are led. In worship sharing we come aware that we will probably speak, although no one is compelled to do so. We enter as though we have all the

time in the world – yet mindful of how much time we actually have. All are individual responsible for keeping within the available time, so that each has an opportunity to speak and to listen to what others say. It is often helpful for one participant to be aware of the time and to gently shepherd those present.

We speak only for ourselves and from our own experiences, attempting to distill the promptings of the Spirit into a single statement. Our goal is to speak from the heart; not to answer, discuss, or correct one another, which can serve to separate us from one another and from what is said. Each person should speak only once before all have had an opportunity to do so. This opens space for those who are more reticent to share in the process.

While others are speaking, we are open and attentive. We listen to others as children of God, each one a unique gift to us. We try to hear how the Holy Spirit might be speaking to us personally in the other's words, in their situation, even – and especially – when we find ourselves resistant to those words.

As each person finishes speaking, we allow time in contemplation to take in what has been said and to be sure we have truly heard it. This is an opportunity to identify our resonances and resistances before the next person speaks.

As we listen, we may become mindful of a pattern emerging that reflects the movement of the Spirit among us.

Clearness Committees

A Clearness Committee is created when one or more individuals who are seeking clearness ask three or four other Friends to join with them in a spirit of worship, listening, and loving concern. Anyone can request a clearness committee from the meeting that he or she attends.

Traditionally, clearness committees involved consideration of a concern that might be brought formally under a meeting's care and discernment, such as a request for membership or marriage. In these cases, clearness is sought on behalf of both the meeting and the individual(s). (See the sections on Membership and Marriage.)

Clearness committees may also be used to test personal decisions or transitions. The clearness process may be used to discern the nature of a call to public ministry or witness, whether there is a leading of the Spirit, what faithfulness requires, and whether way is open for responding. This process may reveal that submitting the leading to the meeting's care and accountability would be empowering.

Clearness is a collective process of discerning the leadings of the Inward Light. The process is simple. Members of the committee ask questions that might help the seeker's own discernment – without offering advice, sharing personal anecdotes, or counseling. Testing for clearness is a spiritual exercise. It requires a spirit of openness and trust in the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

A clearness process that has been favored by the movement of the Spirit may produce an unexpected or surprising outcome.

Individual Spiritual Disciplines

Prayer

Prayer is the aspiration of the soul. It is our communion with God and is essential to religious life. Prayer may be experienced throughout the day by noticing that of God in one another and in the natural world. The result of prayer becomes apparent in the more deeply centered lives of those who are constant in its exercise. We should cultivate individually the habit of turning to God at all times and of seeking divine guidance in all things. Vocal

prayer, when prompted by a deep concern and a sense of human need, is a vital part of worship and often helps those assembled to come into the consciousness of God's presence.

Scriptures and Other Spiritual Writings

God has spoken to all generations. Prophets and teachers to whom the message has come with more convincing power have recorded these revelations of Truth. The hopes and fears, aspirations and trust of a devout people whose quest was to find God and obey God's teaching are recorded in the Bible.

The progressive development which it records leads us from the primitive conceptions of an early religion to the culminating gospel of forgiveness, love and fellowship as taught and lived by Jesus.

Many of the various literary forms of the Bible are characterized by dignity, sublimity and beauty. Its spirit transcends the medium of expression. Through the ages people have turned to the Bible for consolation, for strength, and for hope. Our prayers are often uttered in its language and our ideals of social justice are found in its pages.

We earnestly recommend the reverent, habitual and intelligent reading of the Bible and other spiritual writings for spiritual enrichment. We would ground our children solidly in the Judeo-Christian faith while yet remembering the words of John Woolman: "There is a principle which is pure, placed in the human mind, which in different places and ages hath had different names. It is, however, pure and proceeds from God. It is deep and inward, confined to no forms of religion nor excluded from any, where the heart stands in perfect sincerity."⁴

Spiritual Friendships⁵

A Spiritual Friendship is an intentional, structured relationship between two or more people committed to help one another in their spiritual journeys. The focus is on each person's relationship with God and how God's presence may be felt – or not felt – in their lives.

The establishment of spiritual friendships can deepen and strengthen the life of a Meeting. Two or perhaps three people agree to meet for at least two hours on a regular basis. The topics of conversation can vary according to the needs of each person, but the overall goal is to support one another during conversations through deep, Spirit-led listening and to pray for one another between gatherings. Often such friendships last for years.

Those Friends seeking assistance in forming a spiritual friendship can consult *More Than Equals: Spiritual Friendships* [Pendle Hill Pamphlet, #345] where Australian Friend, Trish Roberts explores the particular ways that Friends can benefit from such relationships. She grounds the practice in Quaker theology and suggests three key features: confidentiality, mutuality, and intentionality.

PRINCIPLES AND APPLICATION

The fundamental faith of the Religious Society of Friends leads to a way of life. In the application of the principles of truth to daily life we acknowledge as supreme the authority of the Divine Spirit in the individual soul. No outward authority can replace it. We must be true to our understanding of God's guidance.

Individuals ought, however, to test their conceptions of truth by comparison with the individual and collective religious experiences of others. Such experiences are found in rich abundance in the Bible and in the lives of spiritual men and women in all ages, the highest expression being in the life and teachings of Jesus.

⁴ Woolman, John, *Considerations on Keeping Negroes*, part 2 and/or Moulton, Phillips, *Journal of John Woolman*, 1971, p. 236.

⁵ Approved in OVYM sessions, June 17, 2017

Jesus lived a life of love. He taught that love is the motive power of life, and that its application is the solution of all the problems of life. To the challenge of this way of life the spirit within us responds. We accept and make the ideals of Jesus our own. We accept the application of the principle of love as the practical way of life and the perfect goal short of which we cannot be satisfied. The bond of our religious fellowship is an experience in the soul that God is love.

Truth is an ever-opening pathway which, if followed, will lead us to higher levels of life and conduct. Its applications vary according to the changing conditions of life. By the faithfulness of each individual in seeking for the truth and making it known to others when found, we are able to advance.

It has been our experience that the guidance of the Divine Spirit has in great measure led us as a group to similar standards of life and conduct. In trying to understand the will of God, a statement of these standards is made as a guide for all who wish to compare their individual revelations to those of others.

We believe that a vital faith must have its application in life. We would place the emphasis not on works alone, nor on faith alone, but upon the union of faith and works.

Quaker Testimonies⁶

"Be patterns, be examples in all countries, places, islands, nations, wherever you come; that your life and conduct may preach among all sorts of people, and to them. Then you will come to walk cheerfully over the world, answering that of God in every one; whereby in them ye may be a blessing, and make the witness of God in them to bless you."⁷

Quaker spirituality is grounded in a direct relationship with the Divine. Quaker testimonies are visible manifestations of our corporate spiritual relationship, flowing naturally from a shared experience of God's call. They are not rules we follow or things we do in order to get close to God but the fruits of faithfulness. As we follow the guidance of the Inward Light, our lives become simpler and our relationships characterized by integrity, equality, and peace. We are drawn into loving community with each other and with all of creation. We become patterns and examples, because testimonies are outward and public acts – shared expressions of the beliefs of the whole community.

For the first 300 years of the Religious Society of Friends, Quakers expressed their inward spiritual relationship through various outward behaviors. These included ministry under the immediate guidance of the Holy Spirit; distinctive manners of dress and speech; and the rejection of professional clergy, outward rites and rituals, and what they termed "the world's recreations and pastimes." Such corporate witness could be dangerous. In times of persecution, publicly identifying with the Society of Friends exposed some to scorn and harassment, fines and imprisonment, even death.

What we now call testimonies have evolved over time. For example, Quaker plain dress, which initially only meant avoiding unnecessary ornamentation, later hardened into the classic gray uniforms for men and women. In the middle of the nineteenth century, most Friends came to see that wearing "plain clothes" was merely a way to enforce outward conformity rather than an expression of an inward spiritual relationship. Today some Friends wear distinctive plain clothes as a personal witness, but most have returned to our earliest understanding of plain dress by adopting a simple, modest appearance.

Continuing revelation also results in new testimonies. For many years, individual Friends felt a personal concern for humanity's relationship with the natural world. More recently, monthly meetings and Ohio Valley Yearly Meeting came to see that this is more than a personal witness. Sustainability is a corporate spiritual imperative, in other words, a Quaker testimony.

⁶ Approved in OVYM Sessions, Jul 29-Aug 2, 2015.

⁷ Statement of 1656, from *The Works of George Fox* (1831)

The origin of our contemporary concept of “Quaker Testimonies” can be found in the mid-twentieth-century writings of Howard Brinton. He proposed that over time Friends had come to realize the social implications of our religious beliefs, and this had resulted in the development of four corporate testimonies – community, harmony, equality, and simplicity. In the intervening years, this list has been modified and expanded in a number of ways by different groups of Friends. In Ohio Valley Yearly Meeting, the Quaker testimonies are generally understood to be simplicity, peace, integrity, community, equality, and harmony with creation. These are broad categories, not an exhaustive list of the ways in which we witness as a religious society. Each will be addressed in a subsection below.

While living our testimonies can be a source of joy, the Spirit has often directed Friends to challenge the customs and standards of the wider society. Faithfulness may require us to act contrary to comfortable and familiar ways. It can lead us into action we would rather avoid, but if we are true to our calling as Friends, we can do no less.

Community⁸

"Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another."⁹

"Our life is love, and peace, and tenderness; and bearing one with another, and forgiving one another, and not laying accusations one against another; but praying one for another, and helping one another up with a tender hand."¹⁰

"In a true community we will not choose our companions, for our choices are so often limited by self-serving motives. Instead, our companions will be given to us by grace. Often they will be persons who will upset our settled view of self and world. In fact, we might define true community as the place where the person you least want to live with always lives!"¹¹

"A well-functioning meeting acts as one, as a body.... It means understanding the meeting community as an organism that is responsive to God as a whole, rather than just as a collection of individuals."¹²

Each of us lives in multiple overlapping and interconnected communities. Some we are born into, while others we choose to join. Each one provides us with an opportunity to test, refine, and express our beliefs, attitudes, and preferences. Claiming membership in a community is a way to define ourselves to others. As we live into that commitment, community can be more than just a group of people. It can embody our testimonies – a way we witness to the world about what we believe to be most important.

A Quaker Community is many things. It is where we seek and worship the divine. It is a body of Friends who provide temporal support and spiritual nurture for each other. It is where we test our sense of what God has called us to do individually and as a people. By shouldering the responsibilities of membership, we declare our willingness to wrestle together with what it means to be a Quaker and to help each other put what we discover into practice. It daily tests us to stay centered in compassion as we encounter the varieties of human experience. A Quaker community declares that each has a unique relationship with God and with each other; it challenges us to faithfully live into those relationships. It is where we risk being transformed.

Community life exposes our own and others’ foibles and failures. It reminds us to look to the Inward Light for guidance in our everyday lives. God brought our companions to us; living with them in community, we learn and

⁸ Approved in OVYM Sessions, Jul 28, 2016

⁹ 1 John 4:11

¹⁰ Isaac Penington, 1667

¹¹ Parker J. Palmer, 1977

¹² Fran Taber, 2004

relearn to love and forgive, to be patient, accepting, and generous. It provides a space for us to safely engage with beliefs that are different from our own.

If we only observe those principles within our Quaker community, it can be an excuse to withdraw into ourselves. The testimony of community requires that we also live out what we believe in the wider world.

When community is our testimony, we love our neighbor as ourselves. Our outward actions reveal spiritually-rooted alternatives to the ways of the wider culture – we model growing spiritually and help others do the same. The Quaker Testimony of Community proclaims a different way to live with others. It challenges each of us to put a relationship with God at the center of our lives and to let that bond shape all of our relationships with each other and with the larger world.

Equality¹³

"God does not show favoritism."¹⁴

"And God hath put no such difference between the Male and Female as men would make."¹⁵

"To consider mankind otherwise than brethren, to think favors are peculiar to one nation and exclude others, plainly supposes a darkness in the understanding. For as God's love is universal, so where the mind is sufficiently influenced by it, it begets a likeness of itself and the heart is enlarged towards all men."¹⁶

"The roots of racial prejudice lie deep within us, and in seeking a solution to the evil results of racial tensions we need to search our own hearts. Our belief in the significance of every individual in the sight of God and his need for an abundant life can guide us even when we shrink before the vastness of the problem."¹⁷

Early Friends based their treatment of others on scripture and continuing revelation. In the Bible, they saw that God created and cares for all humans equally. Continuing revelation led Quakers to see that believing in spiritual equality carries implications for how we live our outward lives.

There is that of God in all people, and we believe each person has equal access to the divine. This fundamental belief led Friends to appreciate women's spiritual gifts and to reject practices designed to maintain distinctions among social classes. Friends came to recognize that no one could justly hold another in slavery. We are also coming to realize how such unjust inequities are maintained by an unequal distribution of wealth and resources – an inequality that many Friends benefit from. Living out the testimonies requires re-examination in each era. We believe humble, faithful discernment in community will reveal what love requires of us.

In recent decades Friends have also come to reject other forms of inequality. In particular, many straight Friends stood with lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer Friends in calling for full equality for people of all gender identities and sexual orientations, and for the elimination of legal barriers to full equality.

Most Friends in OVYM have benefited from unearned, often unacknowledged and unrecognized privileges. It is easy to be lulled into believing racism and unearned privilege have been overcome. This can render Friends oblivious to the ways such attitudes influence behavior. Facing these uncomfortable realities and assumptions can reveal hidden, unfair, and harmful biases.

¹³ Approved in OVYM Sessions, Jul 31, 2016

¹⁴ Romans 2:11

¹⁵ Margaret Fell, *Women's Speaking Justified*, 1666

¹⁶ John Woolman, *Considerations on the Keeping of Negroes*, 1754

¹⁷ 1952 Proceedings of London Yearly Meeting

To be faithful, Friends must be willing to confront anything in our lives, in our religious society, and in the surrounding culture that unjustly holds one person up and holds another back. We need to live up to our understanding that all are equally children of God. Our calling as Friends is to seek more Light in ourselves and others and let that guide us in testifying to equality by our lives.

Integrity¹⁸

"Above all, my beloved, do not swear—not by heaven or by earth or by anything else. Let your ‘Yes’ be yes, and your ‘No,’ no."¹⁹

"Let your lives and conversations preach, that with a measure of the spirit of God you may reach to that of God in all."²⁰

"Fear is a common obstacle to integrity."²¹

When we place truth at the center of our lives, we live with integrity. A life of integrity arises from discerning divine truth as best we can and lovingly acting in accordance with that discernment. Integrity is expressed in being truthful, honest, and transparent; living so that we will not have to be untruthful in the future. These outward signs grow out of ongoing, inward work. Such faithfulness leads to wholeness, to the integration of body, mind, and spirit.

We are limited beings, who often hear the voice of God only faintly. Impatience may tempt us to follow our personal desires. Shame, pride, or insecurity can lead us to seek worldly approval. It takes patience and humility to stand still in the Light and to wait for clarity before we act.

We do not have to travel this path alone. Our meeting communities provide encouragement, strength and companionship in our everyday lives. They can also help us discern the rightness of a perceived leading and provide support and accountability when clearness has been reached. In similar fashion meetings embody integrity when Friends practice discernment together.

When we follow divine guidance, we find the strength and nourishment to be faithful and to speak and act in accordance with truth in all relationships and in all parts of our lives. Integrity is our way of life.

Peace²²

"What causes wars, and what causes fightings among you? Is it not your passions that are at war in your members? You desire and do not have; so you kill. And you covet and cannot obtain; so you fight and wage war... "²³

"I told them I lived in the virtue of that life and power that took away the occasion of all wars...I told them I was come into the covenant of peace which was before wars and strife were."²⁴

"Our principle is ... to seek peace, and ensue it, and to follow after righteousness and the knowledge of God, seeking the good and welfare, and doing that which tends to the peace of all. All bloody principles and practices

¹⁸ Approved in OVYM Sessions, Jul 28, 2016

¹⁹ James 5:12

²⁰ George Fox

²¹ Philip Gulley

²² Approved in OVYM Sessions, Jul 29-Aug 2, 2015.

²³ James 4:1-2 (RSV)

²⁴ Statement of 1651, quoted in *Quaker Faith and Practice*, Britain Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends

we do utterly deny, with all outward wars, and strife, and fightings with outward weapons, for any end, or under any pretense whatsoever, and this is our testimony to the whole world."²⁵

Declaration to Charles II, 1660

" May we look upon our treasures, and the furniture of our houses, and the garments in which we array ourselves, and try whether the seeds of war have nourishment in these our possessions, or not."²⁶

John Woolman, *A Plea for the Poor*

Through continuing revelation, Friends testimonies against war and for peace have evolved over the centuries. At first, Friends simply refused to participate in war or military service. Over time, Quakers came to understand that mere opposition to war was insufficient and were led to work for peace. Our peace testimony has led us individually and corporately to work for the abolition of practices rooted in violence and coercion and to sow the seeds of peace in our lives and in the world.

We live in a society that glorifies war. Friends seek to follow the teaching and example of Jesus in rejecting the use of coercion and violence. We believe that God calls us to live together in the covenant of peace envisioned by George Fox. Our path is grounded in deep spiritual listening for the guidance of the Inward Teacher, in humility and openness to multiple perspectives.

Living this way requires patience, perseverance, and courage, and often results in legal, social, or financial sacrifices. When faced with military registration and conscription, many Friends claim conscientious objector status or refuse any cooperation with the military. Some refuse to pay war taxes or restrict their incomes to avoid the assessment of such taxes. Some Friends voluntarily place themselves in harm's way in order to witness for peace and against oppression and the use of violence. Friends also encourage governments to refrain from military responses to international conflicts and other acts of violence. Quaker organizations like the American Friends Service Committee and Right Sharing of World Resources contribute to building a more peaceful world.

If violence and war are to be avoided, whether between individuals, groups, or entire nations, their sources must be recognized. The seeds of conflict are in our hearts. Fear, greed, and intolerance wound the human spirit and obscure the Inner Light given to each person. Quaker peace witness seeks to heal these wounds by answering that of God in each person with courage, compassion, and justice.

We believe that God has called us to lead lives of non-violence, seeking creative alternatives to resolve conflicts when they arise in our lives. The path of peace is in many ways at odds with the world around us and may lead us to act in ways that challenge the values of the dominant culture. On occasion, it may also require patience as we lovingly hold the tension of an as-yet-unresolved conflict, awaiting a transformation of mind and heart within others and within ourselves.

Friends seek to foster a future rooted in peace and freed from historical cycles of violence, resentment, and strife. We have a responsibility to nurture the spirit of love in all, but especially our young people, teaching them to practice non-violence in their own lives, to stand against coercion and intimidation in all forms, and to stand for mutual respect and peace.

Over the centuries, the Inward Light has guided Friends to oppose slavery, to end the death penalty, to improve conditions in prisons, to feed and clothe victims on all sides of wars, to empower the disenfranchised, the outcast, and the stranger. This work continues. As our understanding of God's leadings for us grows, new expressions of our peace witness will emerge, develop, and mature.

²⁵ Text from the 2 Volume 8th and Bicentenary Edition of Fox's *Journal*, London: Friends' Tract Association, 1891

²⁶ Woolman, John, *The Works of John Woolman*, Philadelphia: Benjamin Johnson, 1806 p. 413.

Seeking Harmony with Creation²⁷

The Earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof,
The world and those who dwell therein.
(Psalm 24: 1)

Quakers have a long and deep history of respect for the creation of which we are a part. Our wondrous world is a manifestation of the Divine with the power to nourish us physically and spiritually. William Penn articulated this faith-based concern for the Earth when he asked how human beings could “find the Confidence to abuse [Creation], while they should see the Great Creator look them in the Face, in all and every Part thereof?” Likewise, John Woolman wrote, “To say we love God as unseen and at the same time to exercise cruelty toward the least creature moving by his life ... is a contradiction in itself.”

Ongoing exploitation of the Earth's resources threatens the delicate ecological balance that sustains the current web of life. Flowing from our testimonies, Friends' responses take various forms. In 2002, Ohio Valley Yearly Meeting Friends found unity around the principle of sustainability as a basic standard for responsible living.

God calls us, individually and corporately, to examine our lives and take action to walk more lightly on the Earth, seeking harmony with creation. Friends are also called to promote systemic changes in government and industry that would heal and protect the Earth. With Divine assistance, our witness should offer a pattern that would inspire and inform the actions of others.

Simplicity²⁸

"[Requiring that] we must be all in one dress and one colour: this is a silly poor gospel. It is more fit for us to be covered with God's Eternal Spirit and clothed with his Eternal Light, which leads us and guides us into righteousness."²⁹

"Too many of us have too many irons in the fire. We get distracted by the intellectual claim to our interest in a thousand and one good things, and before we know it we are pulled and hauled breathlessly along by an overburdened program of good committees and good undertakings."³⁰

"Central to the Friends' testimony on simplicity is the injunction to seek first the kingdom of God."³¹

A life centered on listening to and following the Inward Teacher is characterized by simplicity. This simplicity flows from our direct relationship with God and leads us to maintain humility of spirit and to forego over-indulgence, ostentation, and stressful busyness.

The world we live in entices us with distractions. Friends are advised to guard against self-indulgence, extravagance, or obsession with anything else that would lead to neglect of our spiritual lives. Friends recommend simplicity and moderation in our social gatherings, weddings, funerals, and public occasions.

The practice of genuine simplicity is itself simple, and attempts to establish strict norms for simplicity can become distractions. For example, simplicity does not require the rejection of modern technology; indeed, the avoidance of practical technology can lead to the unnecessary complication of one's own life and the lives of others. Simplicity is the natural character of a centered life, not an end in itself. Friends can be tempted to self-

²⁷ Approved in OVYM Sessions, July 29, 2011.

²⁸ Approved in OVYM Sessions, Jul 28, 2016

²⁹ Margaret Fell Fox, 1700

³⁰ Thomas R. Kelly, 1941

³¹ Faith and Practice of New England Yearly Meeting, 1985

righteousness when we reckon our own simplicity to be superior to that of others. Each Friend is encouraged to seek Divine Guidance so that our outward behavior best reflects our inward focus on Divine joy.

Practicing simplicity nurtures our spiritual lives, strengthens our interpersonal relationships and benefits the larger world. By observing and encouraging simple tastes in apparel, furniture, buildings, and manner of living, we do away with unwholesome rivalry. This is helpful for our children who may feel pressured to define themselves and others by their possessions. Teaching our children the basis and practice of simplicity helps them to focus on the fundamentals of respectful relationships. When we curb our impulse to consume, we also strengthen our witness to care for the earth and to act for social justice. Focusing on the Inward Teacher frees us to live simply; living simply frees us to deepen our relationship with God.

Divine Relationship

It is our common experience that communion with God is a fundamental need of the human soul. Constant listening for the promptings of the Divine Spirit and seeking to follow it in every relation of life will lead inevitably to spiritual growth.

If we are faithful followers of Jesus, we may expect at times to differ from the practice of others. Having in mind that truth in all ages has been advanced by the courageous example of spiritual leaders. Friends are earnestly advised to be faithful to those leadings of the Divine Spirit which they feel they have interpreted truly after mature meditation and consideration.

Observance of special days and times and use of special places for worship serve a helpful purpose in calling attention at regular intervals to our need for spiritual communion. They cannot, however, take the place of daily and hourly looking to God for guidance. Nor can any custom of fasting or abstaining from bodily comforts take the place of constantly refraining from everything which has a tendency to unfit mind and body for being the temple of the Divine Spirit. The foundation for all our personal life and social relations should be the sufficient and irreplaceable consciousness of God.

Moderation

Things lawful in themselves may become harmful when used to excess. Friends are advised to observe moderation in everything and to abstain entirely from that which may be the occasion of stumbling of others.

In particular, Friends are urged to observe simplicity and moderation in the conduct of social gatherings, marriages, funerals and public occasions.

Alcohol, Drugs, Tobacco

Our bodies are closely responsive to the treatment they receive. They serve us best when they have proper nutrition and healthful living conditions. Friends have traditionally opposed the use of alcohol, tobacco, narcotics and other addictive drugs for reasons of health and because of the tragedies often resulting from their use. Total abstinence is the clearest witness against the use of harmful substances.

Friends are reminded that their attitudes and example where the use of alcohol, drugs and tobacco are concerned may be of positive educational force in the lives of others. Let us try by persistent efforts to combat the overwhelming influences of advertising and public license.

Criticism of varying standards should be tempered by loving appreciation of individual judgment.

Use of Time

Time is one of God's gifts which we easily take for granted, and in the use of which we are commonly prodigal. It is rich in opportunities, yet it is relentless in its record of our selection. According to the way we spend the minutes and hours, we will find the Divine Spirit within us either coming into possession or being crowded out of our lives. So Friends wish to lay special emphasis on cheerful and loving persistence in those patterns of living which will allow a larger and fuller experience of God each day.

Recreation

Proper recreation is desirable for the refreshment of body and mind. Friends are encouraged to participate in forms of recreation that are beneficial and that most fully involve them in the wholeness of life.

Those engaging in athletic sports in schools, colleges or elsewhere should enter them in a spirit of friendly competition, and in either defeat or success give generous recognition to the opposing side.

Amusements or diversions that cause needless suffering to any of God's creatures should not be considered harmless; neither should those that cannot be remembered without regret or remorse.

Television has come to be a part of most households, and its effect can be an educational and recreational force of positive value. Friends need to be aware of the harmful barrage of false values such as violence and the affluent consumption of material goods which form much of the content of television, both programs and advertising. Special care needs to be taken so that neither children nor adults will substitute harmful sedentary absorption for wholesome activity.

Our Society bears a testimony against betting, gambling and lotteries or any other endeavors to receive value without exchanging an equivalent. We hold a firm belief that these practices are wrong in principle: we owe an honest return for that which we receive. Indulgence in games of chance for the purpose of winning prizes often blunts this proper sense of obligation.

Also the first day of the week affords for many people valued opportunities for rest and recreation, these should be arranged at a time that does not conflict with the First-day School and the Meeting for Worship.

Stewardship

We are called upon to be stewards not only of the Divine Spirit which God has implanted within us, but also of the rich provision which the Creator has made for the sustenance of all life on earth. If we are true followers of Jesus, we must ever be seeking to bring conditions of life in this world into conformity with the purposes of God. It cannot be God's will that the vast numbers of our brothers and sisters should pass their lives in surroundings that render difficult the quickening of the Divine Spirit within them. Nor is it sufficient that we should be merely kind and liberal to the poor, for the poverty we seek to relieve may be due in part to unjust conditions, intensified perhaps by our own thoughtless conduct.

Friends should consider how our ways of spending money affect others. We should endeavor to share our advantages and should guard against pursuing modes of life that minister only to our comforts. When we live in the Life which is attuned to nature and which finds joy and satisfaction in human relationships and personal growth, we will be less dependent on material possessions and more protective of our environment.

Purchasers who buy articles that are useful, well made and produced under right conditions help to direct industry into channels beneficial to society.

Owners of property, whether in the form of land, stocks or securities, are counseled to be mindful of the responsibility which their ownership imposes for the management and uses of their property. Investors of money should keep in mind not only the security and rate of interest, but the conditions under which the income is produced.

CLOSE RELATIONSHIPS

"See these Quakers, how they love one another." (Edward Hicks, 1851)

Introduction³²

The fundamental faith of the Religious Society of Friends should be visible in our daily lives. Faithful Friends seek to practice Divine love in close relationships with our community of family, friends, and the children under our care. As we experience God's love, we grow in love for God and our fellow human beings. We are called upon to clothe ourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, patience, forbearance, and forgiveness in our lives with one another (Colossians 3:12-13). Both individuals and monthly meetings have a responsibility to support and nurture spiritually edifying close relationships built on this foundation.

Friendship³³

Deep friendships strengthen us spiritually. They encourage, stretch, challenge, and sustain us. In friendship we respect one another, protect one another's reputation, and honor confidentiality. Good friends minister to one another by listening with an open heart and mind and speaking truth with love. Through our experience of friendships across genders, sexualities, classes, generations, faith traditions, races, and ethnicities we move toward establishing the Kingdom of God on earth.

Since the earliest days of our Religious Society, Quakers have been encouraged to know one another in those things that are eternal. Spiritually uplifting friendships require faithfulness to the leadings of the Spirit, not necessarily agreement on every point of faith and practice.

Sexuality³⁴

Sexuality is a gift from God, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity.

It is a powerful force that can transform life in ways both positive and negative. Mutual love and respect, honesty, and commitment are essential ingredients of a rightly ordered relationship.

Deep respect for that of God in each person requires that our relationships be free of exploitation and abuse as well as subtle manipulation. Abuse of sexuality can have serious, long-term, emotional, physical, and spiritual consequences. Sexuality education for both children and adults should use the best scientific information available. Furthermore, because sexuality can be one of the ways we participate in the love of God, a true understanding of sexuality must also include the spiritual dimension.

³² Approved in OVYM Sessions, Jul 30, 2012

³³ Approved in OVYM Sessions, Jul 30, 2012

³⁴ Approved in OVYM Sessions, Jul 30, 2012

Marriages and other steadfast commitments³⁵

Our meetings are enlivened and challenged by marriages and other steadfast commitments. Such commitments build spiritual bonds that make themselves felt not only in the home and in the meeting but also in the world. As relationships develop, the partners ideally find richness in sharing on all levels of being: physical, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual.

Some committed partners request marriage under the care of the meeting. [An affirmation of marriage equality for same-sex couples is to be found on pp. xx in this volume in the context of the sub-section on the Testimony of Equality.] Following a discernment process, marriage is solemnized in a Meeting for Worship, the partners promising with Divine assistance to be faithful to each other. We believe that God alone can rightly join partners in marriage, and neither a religious nor a secular official is required to accomplish this. When a Quaker Meeting takes a marriage under its care, it witnesses the marriage and makes a serious commitment to support and strengthen that marriage. [The recommendations for the wedding procedure are to be found on pp. **Error! eference source not found.Error! Reference source not found.Error! Bookmark not defined.** in this volume.]

It is the conviction of Friends that marriage is a covenant for life. A lifelong commitment can sustain a marriage through very trying times, forging a deeper and more spiritually mature relationship. Implicit in the marriage promise is the realization that problems and conflicts will arise and that both partners are committed to making sincere efforts with Divine guidance to resolve them. This is not an easy task but a high calling toward which we should strive.

Supporting marriages and other steadfast commitments

Meetings have a responsibility to lift up the importance of love, trust, and mutual respect in marriage and other steadfast relationships. As time passes and individuals change, relationships will also change. These changes offer opportunities for spiritual growth and for the deepening of the relationship. Meetings can nurture this process in a variety of ways. This support might range from home visitations, to celebrations of anniversaries, to holding workshops and retreats, to referring couples to resources offered by wider Quaker bodies.

If particular needs or difficulties arise, Friends are advised to hold the couple in prayer and to offer gentle encouragement. It is our experience that a confidential clearness committee offered by the meeting can assist a couple (or an individual) in seeking God's guidance in the relationship. Meetings should be aware of their limitations and be prepared to refer couples to specialized resources beyond the meeting.

Sharing a home

Friends recognize that shared homes include a variety of possible relationships, such as single-parent, two-parent, blended, and multi-generational households, as well as adults living without children. We rejoice and are nourished in homes full of friendliness, refreshment, and peace, where the Light can be felt by those who live there and by all who visit. Such homes reflect caring, trust, and commitment in an atmosphere of good humor and play. The efforts of making a home should be shared with tender regard for the needs and abilities of all members and with appreciation for their unique contributions, recognizing that needs and abilities grow and diminish over the course of each person's life. In the home our beliefs and practices are tested on a daily basis, and conflicts within families are inevitable. Learning ways to resolve them through openness, honesty, and mutual respect helps strengthen our relationships. Friends are reminded that the guidance of the Light Within is at all times available to lead us into greater love.

Special needs and long-term illness

³⁵ Approved in OVYM Sessions, Jul 30, 2012

Special needs and long-term illnesses can arise at any time in a person's life and may entail physical, cognitive, social, or psychological challenges. Caring for a child, adult, or aging family member with special needs or a long-term illness can bring unanticipated blessings, but it can also exhaust and isolate the caregiver and can put strain on relationships within the household. Realizing that families may be reluctant to ask for help, Friends should reach out with sensitivity to offer support and nurture to each family in a way appropriate to its unique needs.

Addiction in a home

Addiction to alcohol and other substances poses unique challenges that can seriously undermine the health of a household. Friends are encouraged to inform themselves about addictive behavior in order to provide appropriate types of support to addicts and their loved ones. Addiction requires treatment, and support of an addict requires support for treatment. Even with the best of intentions, providing shelter and sustenance can merely perpetuate the addiction. Meetings should support members who are undertaking the difficult actions required to make recovery possible for members of their households.

Divorce

Friends are cautioned against divorce or separation except under extreme circumstances. Escape from domestic unhappiness through the all too common practice of divorce repudiates an agreement entered into for life, and gives countenance and support to a usage demoralizing to home life. Friends should rather strive, through frequent communication on a deep and honest level, to reconcile differences when they arise. Even when anger and resentment arise, these feelings may be dealt with in constructive ways which contribute to self-knowledge and improved interpersonal relationships.

Although Friends may make every effort to reconcile differences, there are times when close relationships end. Meetings can play a constructive role in these transitions by extending compassionate care to all those involved and responding to that of God in each person. Friends should recognize that children in these situations may be especially in need of the meeting's love and care.

Abuse in a home

The exercise of inappropriate power in close relationships can result in physical, psychological, or sexual abuse. In the face of the social isolation often associated with an abusive home, those victimized may feel alone and desperate. Meetings are advised to educate themselves about domestic abuse and to become particularly sensitive to signs of such situations and to be bold in offering assistance. Meetings are encouraged to create communities of trust in which those who are being abused can seek the support of the meeting.

Nurturing children

To watch the spirit of children, to nurture them in Gospel Love, and labour to help them against that which would mar the beauty of their minds, is a debt we owe them; and a faithful performance of our duty not only tends to their lasting benefit and our own peace, but also to render their company agreeable to us.
(John Woolman, 1758)

Our children are given to us for a time to cherish, to protect, to nurture, and then to salute as they go their separate ways. They too have the light of God within, and a family should be a learning community in which children not only learn skills and values from parents, but in which adults learn new ways of experiencing things and seeing things through young eyes. From their birth on, let us cultivate the habit of dialogue and receptive listening. We should respect their right to grow into their own wholeness, not just the wholeness we may wish for them.
(Elizabeth Watson, 1980)

Every child deserves physical, intellectual, and spiritual nurture. To this end, parents and other adult caregivers must establish themselves as loving and reliable sources of guidance. Caring for children is a life-transforming responsibility, bringing joys, challenges, and experiences of personal and spiritual growth for adult and child. Through good example and consistent teaching, we can counteract many of the negative influences children inevitably encounter. Children are greatly influenced by parents who lead faithful lives, discerning and following the Light Within. Our inward faith is made manifest through practicing simplicity, honesty, nonviolence, service, and love.

To guide our youth toward a life of fulfillment and service, it is essential that Quakers teach their children about creative responses to conflict, the consequences of violent behavior, discernment in sexual activity, the dangers of addiction, and the importance of living in harmony with creation. At the same time, parents and other caregivers should not impose on their children their full range of expectations but rather should have a deep appreciation of who their children are in their own right and support the unfolding of each child's unique gifts. We believe that by nurturing the development of self-worth, self-confidence, and self-discipline, we help children to grow into responsible and compassionate adults. Parents and other caregivers should teach their children about the faith and practice of the Religious Society of Friends, and meetings should support children's participation in Quaker youth events and activities. The habit of quiet waiting upon God, both in meeting for worship and in regular family devotion, tends to strengthen and develop the spiritual life of a child.

Preparation for Death

An awareness of our mortality may help us to find life richer in the present, to cope better with the deaths of those we love, and to accept death with dignity for ourselves. Friends are encouraged to talk openly about death and its meaning for our spiritual lives. Many find that as they face impending death, they are drawn to invite their loved ones into exceptionally frank and open conversations, often leading to emotional healing and forgiveness.

Meetings are encouraged to provide practical education about preparations for death. We can ease the impact of our death on those we love by making certain preparations. Each adult Friend is encouraged to consider making advanced directives, to make a will, and to express preferences regarding organ donations, the disposal of the body, and a memorial meeting. Meetings may wish to keep copies of these documents on file and be prepared to contact relatives in the case of a member's death or other emergency.

Bereavement

Not even the most careful preparation can alleviate the natural sorrow and grief felt by surviving loved ones. Grieving family and friends will welcome the strength provided by the spiritual, emotional, and practical support of the wider family of Friends. Meetings are advised to recognize that not everyone grieves the death of a loved one in the same way, and Friends are advised to be sensitive to the unique feelings and needs of each grieving person. Friends may be called upon to be compassionate listeners and to help those grieving appreciate how much the gifts of their loved one enriched the lives of others. Friends are advised to be sensitive to grieving survivors during potentially tender times of the year or on particularly tender occasions. All can find support and joy in continuing to celebrate the life of the deceased person while acknowledging his or her death.

RELIGIOUS FELLOWSHIP

Responsibility of Membership

Fuller spiritual life can be fostered by membership in a religious organization. Liberty to choose a religious affiliation exists for every individual. When the choice has been made, responsibility for service follows.

Attendance at Meetings

Regular attendance at meetings for the promotion of religious interests, such as meetings for worship, First-day schools and meetings for business, will enable us to avail ourselves of the opportunities for service which exist in such organizations. It will also enable us to become more firmly grounded in the faith and principles upon which our Society is founded and will result in our spiritual growth.

Advancement of Principles Held by Friends

Our separate existence in the religious community is justified by our testimony to the truth as revealed to us. It devolves upon us therefore to be faithful in the expression of those principles for which our Society stands. Beliefs become vital only when translated into life and conduct. The faith of our members should find expression in work for spiritual, moral and mental education, and in the improvement of social and economic conditions.

World Religious Unity

The Living Spirit of Christ commends Friends to openness in their relationships with all people. Cooperation with those of other religious faiths promotes mutual understanding and unity among all those who endeavor to follow the will of God, by whatever name they are called. Loving relationships should be practiced wherever our lives touch those of others, guarding against any feeling of superiority, showing respect and understanding for one another's point of view, and finding one's way into the hearts and minds of others. We can practice our view that God's presence is in every person.

EDUCATIONAL RELATIONS

The purpose of education is to build character and to make an individual a more serviceable instrument in bringing about the kingdom of God. While inspiration, often the stimulus for this effort, is the direct gift of God to the human soul and not a product of education, yet God's revelations are more likely to be perceived and can be used to better advantage if the body has been trained for health, the hand for work, the mind for thought, and if the attention has been directed toward spiritual truth. Powers of observation, thought and expression need training that we may do our work well. Many of us require teaching to overcome a prejudiced and unreasoning attitude toward others and to meet humanity with the reverence that is due the children of one loving Spirit.

Education of Children

We regard the educational process as primarily the development of character through the acquisition of knowledge and skills, the training of the mind to think and the growth of the individual's capacities for appreciation, social fellowship and worship. The first and most important education of the individual is received in the home circle. Later, the home and the school should work in close conjunction to perfect the work of education.

Public Education

School education is now primarily a public function to be carried out by the state for the benefit of all children. Friends historically were among the earlier advocates of universal free public education. We urge our members to continue to use their influence as citizens to elevate the standards of our public schools.

Friends' Schools

Besides giving support to the public school system, Friends may make an important contribution to education by maintaining schools and colleges in which their ideals are especially exemplified. Such schools should be leaders in the field of education. The best schools render conspicuous service to our Society and to the pupils whom they train. It is desirable for our children to receive at least a part of their education in Friends' schools. During their formative years, the ideals and interests and association of Friends should be a part of their education.

Religious Education

The special field of religious education is to help establish right relationships with God, to build right attitudes, and to influence right conduct. It should lead to a way of living. Schools and colleges conducted by Friends are urged to offer special courses in the Bible and other religious literature, and in the religious interpretation of life. Emphasis should be given to the religious aspects of science, history, literature and art. The foundation thus laid should lead to a life-long realization of the rich gifts of the spirit.

Each meeting should provide through First-day schools or otherwise for adequate study of religious ideals and history, including the history and principles of the Society of Friends. Teachers should suitably prepare themselves for this important work.

Monthly Meeting Support

Meetings are advised to make an annual survey to show how the children of each monthly meeting are being educated. Meetings should exercise care that all children among their members have adequate opportunity for education. When necessary, meetings should provide funds for this purpose.

SOCIAL RELATIONS

Universal Love

We acknowledge that all persons are children of one God, whose love and care are shared by all. We earnestly urge our members to be faithful to the principle of universal love in all the affairs of life. As the love of God prevails in our souls, we are led to love and forgive one another. Under the influence of that love we will give the shortcomings of others the best construction which circumstances warrant; we will not make such matters a topic of common conversation, but rather endeavor quietly to remove any causes tending to disturb the love, unity and peace which should prevail among the followers of truth.

Christian ideals need no concealment, nor can the equality which Jesus taught be restricted by any secret ritual or creed; therefore, Friends are cautioned against membership in any organization which will directly or indirectly diminish sympathy with any portion of humankind, or which may lead to the condemnation of the people of any religion, race or nationality.

In all human relationships our profession of God's universal love should prevent our making any distinctions of class, station, wealth, color or race which might bar friendly interaction.

Social Improvement

We view the world as one community in which no group of persons can live in peace until all receive justice. We recognize the obligation to work as way opens toward developing social institutions which more nearly meet the needs of all people. We can best understand and cooperate with others when we know their conditions and aspirations. Especially is this true regarding those who are oppressed by the social and economic systems under

which they live. Through a sensitivity to cultural differences and a spirit of reciprocal sharing of ideas, reconciliation and nonviolent social change may be promoted.

We realize we are a part of both the cause and the solution of the problems of the world. Our lives are often made comfortable by the hidden exploitation of people, inherent in our highly industrialized society. We should all face honestly the conditions of our particular situation and their impact on the complex social and economic systems of the world. With Divine help, we should work for the changes which will insure that all human beings can live in harmony and with dignity.

Many openings exist for those who are willing to devote themselves to social betterment in the improvement of living and housing conditions, the extension of public education, the improvement of public health, penal reforms and other important matters for the advancement of the social order. Changing social and economic conditions are constantly creating new problems of readjustment which require careful study for their proper solution. Disease, disasters and human strife create conditions requiring the devoted service of those who are able to extend care to the sick, the suffering and the needy.

Voluntary Service

Social service as a vocation can best be undertaken by those especially qualified by training. But there remains for every willing individual an opportunity for service in daily life and at special times. All our members should carefully consider what form of service they may best render to those in need. Our younger as well as older members are urged to consider seriously devoting a definite portion of their lives to service at home or abroad under the care of our own or similar organizations which exist for the promotion of human welfare.

BUSINESS RELATIONS

Friends are urged in all their business and professional relations to make the motive of service superior to that of profit, and to endeavor by the application of both religious and economic principles to give full value for a fair compensation.

Industrial Relations

Friends involved in all fields of endeavor are urged to work in the spirit of service and to avoid exploitation of others.

Those who are employers or supervisors of other people will find that recognition of and respect for each employee as an individual will smooth relations between management and labor. They are responsible for seeing that everyone's work load is equitable, that each one has reasonable working hours, and that pay be in accord with the work performed. In setting wage levels it is essential that employers consider the needs of employees and their families. These needs include necessary health and unemployment protection.

It is important for the worker to give a full day's work for a full day's pay and to maintain a high standard of work quality while being sensitive to problems faced by the employer and other employees.

Individuals should practice thrift and take thought for the future to be prepared for retirement.

When manifest injustice exists in a place of employment, each person should conscientiously examine the possibility of non-violent methods to remedy that injustice.

Cooperation

Recognizing that in the proper conduct of trade and industry the highest interests of employers and employees are mutual and interdependent, adequate means should be provided for understanding and cooperation. Having faith that only fairness and good-will provide the means for the permanent settlement of economic differences, we urge Friends to place their dependence upon these principles and to be willing to act as mediators in bringing these methods before others as a better way than force and violence.

Corporations

Friends, in their relations with corporations, whether as stockholders or otherwise, should be governed by the same high standards as in their relations with individuals. If the conduct of a corporation is inconsistent with high standards of individual conduct, it should be the duty of Friends, if protests do not avail, to refuse to retain ownership of stock, or to work for, or to purchase products from such a corporation.

Trust Funds

When Friends are placed in positions of trust, whether as trustee, assignee, treasurer or other fiduciary capacity in which they are responsible for the administration of property of others, they should exercise great care to discharge their duties with diligence, good judgment and the strictest integrity. For this purpose it is advised that any such moneys be kept strictly apart from their own, that separate accounts be maintained, and that a careful audit be made at least yearly of all accounts, including the verification of all investment securities.

Wills

Friends are urged to make their wills in time of health and strength of judgment in order to prevent the inconvenience, loss and trouble to their beneficiaries of dying intestate. Wills should be made with strict regard to justice and equity, with proper provision for dependents and in accordance with legal statutes.

Promises

Friends are urged to be scrupulous in abiding by the spirit as well as the letter of their promises, contracts and agreements, in buying and selling and in all other matters.

Debts

Friends are earnestly advised to make prompt payment of just debts at the time agreed, and to avoid undue delay in payment when no time is stipulated. They should recognize it as a moral duty to avoid incurring debts beyond their ability to pay, and even when legally discharged of any debt should feel that the obligation remains.

Accounts

By means of clear and accurate accounts of their business transactions, Friends will be the better able to keep themselves well acquainted with their resources and to arrange their expenditures with due regard to their income. Frequent inspection of business affairs and a balancing of accounts at least once a year are recommended.

Engaging in Business

It is the duty of every person to select some form of useful occupation. Care should be exercised in making this selection and the advice of those of mature judgment should be obtained. Friends should be cautious in starting a business without requisite capital and experience, and engaging in hazardous ventures because of prospective abnormal profits.

Accumulation of Wealth

Habits of industry and thrift, important as they are, sometimes tend, unless carefully watched, to degenerate into habits of love for wealth and its accumulation.

Friends should seek to discern how much of their income or property can be spared, and in what manner it may be wisely distributed, for the benefit of others. It should not be a burden but a privilege to be able to contribute when appeals are made to us for the support of our Religious Society and for worthy educational and philanthropic work.

CIVIC RELATIONS

Duties of Citizenship

Believing that the Kingdom of God on earth is advanced by those who devote themselves with unselfish public spirit to the building of a high national character, and to the shaping of a righteous policy of government both at home and abroad, we urge Friends to be active in the performance of all duties of good citizenship.

Voting and Public Office

Every opportunity for participation in decisions of public matters by ballot should be used, and when exercising their duties as individual voters, Friends are urged to maintain a clearness of judgment which will enable them to act upon principle.

By the participation of men and women of intelligence, calm judgment and high principle in the direct responsibilities of government, which may be done to form a healthy public opinion which will lead to purity of administration and to a wise solution of the many problems of city, state and national government. When called to serve in public office, Friends should consider the public good, and having accepted such office, they should serve with diligence and integrity. Public office should not be used for the gratification of personal ambition or for pecuniary gain.

Voluntary Public Service

While the number of those who are able to service in public office may be comparatively small, there is a wide field for voluntary public service in the several agencies and organizations which exist for civic betterment. Friends are urged to be faithful to their responsibilities as citizens by taking part in such service.

Treatment of Civic Offenders

Enlightened treatment of civic offenders by constructive methods rather than by merely primitive action is a reform challenging those who endeavor to follow Christian principles. While condemning unrighteous acts, we should at the same time seek to have offenders treated in a manner conducive to the strengthening of their moral character, the maintenance of their self-respect, and their reclamation as useful members of society.

Early and recent experiences of Friends, as well as expert opinion and statistical analysis, indicate a failure of the U.S. prison and rehabilitation systems. The rate of recidivism (return to prison) continues at greater than 50% as a national average. For most offenders, incarceration means further training in crime; for their families, it means social disgrace and economic insecurity. It should be considered only when the individual is a real danger to society. Friends should be counted among those who actively seek and support alternative methods to incarceration in our criminal justice system.

Friends are opposed to capital punishment because it is contrary to the Divine law of love. The application of the death penalty is brutalizing and degrading to the public mind. It leaves no room for the reformation of character, nor for the revision of the sentence in the event of a miscarriage of justice.

Obedience to Law

Our first allegiance is to the will of God. It should, therefore, be the endeavor of every Friend to influence the making and changing of secular laws so that they may more nearly accord with Divine laws. It is the duty of all citizens to uphold and obey all legal enactments, unless they directly violate their deep convictions of the dictates of God. If conditions arise in which national or civil laws appear to be absolutely at variance with Divine law, Friends should take prayerful counsel to arrive at a decision in accordance with God's will. They should also sustain and uphold with spiritual encouragement those who are impelled by allegiance to Divine law to take a difficult stand. Special care should be given in such instances to make clear that the action is not taken in disrespect of the laws of society nor with intent to evade them, but in accordance with the dictates of the higher law. Those who act on the principle of obedience to God must be prepared to suffer for the sake of their convictions.

PEACE AND COOPERATION

God's law of love, as fully exemplified by the life of Jesus, is applicable to nations as well as to individuals. Because of this application, war as a means of settling difficulties between nations becomes morally unlawful, just as are feuds between groups and duels between individuals. We cannot recognize a double standard of morality, one for individuals and another for nations. The morality which is required of us in our dealings with one another is equally binding upon us when we are called upon to act for our nation.

From its earliest days the Religious Society of Friends has held that war is contrary to the spirit, the life and the teachings of Jesus, who renounced the weapons of worldly passion and used the methods of love and self-sacrifice in their place. We restate our conviction that no plea of necessity of policy, however urgent, can release individuals or nations from their duty to follow the law of love. It is a serious and solemn thing to stand as the advocate of an inviolable peace. To carry out such a profession consistently will, at times, require the highest resolution, perseverance and courage. Such should, however, be the devoted effort of every Friend.

Prevention of War

If war is to be prevented, the spirit from which war proceeds must be eliminated, and the beginnings of strife must be as watchfully guarded against between nations as between individuals. To give occasions of offense or jealousy to the inhabitants or to the governments of other countries, whether by imputing evil motives, by trade or other discrimination, by needless alarms of invasion, by the accumulations of armaments or by anything approaching a hostile attitude, is inconsistent alike with Christian duty and with the best interests of any nation.

History provides evidence that armed preparedness is not only futile in preventing war but is actually conducive to it. Friends are urged to develop the better preparedness of a public mind which is ready to grant justice to other nations exactly as we desire justice from our own country.

Friends and Taxes

Seeking the guidance of the Inward Light, both in solitude with God and in fellowship with each other, Friends should consider seriously the social significance of the purposes to which their tax money is put.

Payment of federal income tax, when used in a war-related activity, is a demand which may properly move Quakers and other responsible citizens to take a position of conscientiously withholding of financial support of war. We support both those who pay their taxes in full and those who undertake alternative action of conscientious resistance to war taxes. Such action may take many forms: refusing to pay part or all of the tax, refusing to file a return, working only at a job where no tax is withheld from wages, intentionally keeping one's income so low that it is not taxable, resisting coercion by tax collectors and their agents, supporting other resisters and their families, and giving public testimony and witness. Friends undertaking such action should be prepared to suffer willingly for the sake of their convictions. They should also consider whether money withheld from the federal government should be donated to organizations which promote world peace and equality.

Creating a Peace Spirit

It is very important that young people be so imbued with the spirit of love as manifested by Jesus that they will be able to take their stand for peace and international good-will under all circumstances. We therefore encourage parents and teachers to carefully instruct their boys and girls in the principles and practice of peace, and of the numerous successful settlements of disputes between nations by nonviolent means. We also recommend that Friends exert their influence toward the use of textbooks in the schools that give emphasis to the peaceful achievement of nations, and that tend to create a sympathetic understanding of their conditions and problems.

Friends should endeavor to eliminate all military drills from schools and to avoid connection with military organizations of all kinds. Such associations have a serious effect on those who take part in them by creating a spirit of militarism which destroys calm judgment on international issues and retards the growing sense of kinship in the world.

Patriotism

We greatly desire that the children of our country shall be imbued with the true conception of patriotism and service to the nation and to humanity. True patriots are those who exert themselves to make their country a positive factor in cooperating for the betterment of the world. Working to improve the civic, economic, social and moral condition of one's own country is a truer expression of patriotism than exalting one's own nation at the expense of others or supporting and justifying its action irrespective of right or justice.

International Cooperation and Arbitration

"Because God hath made of one blood all nations" (Acts 17:26), the higher interests of all nations are closely allied. Friends should work for the promotion of such association among the nations as will consider and settle international problems in the interest of all without regard to size or power. Friends should vigorously advocate arbitration as a practical step toward maintaining peace.

We recognize it to be our duty to inform ourselves regarding those of other races and nationalities without our own country and regarding other nations having a culture different from our own, that we may be qualified to exert our influence in establishing a high standard of individual and national conduct toward them. Friends should rise above prejudice and unjust discrimination in dealing with persons of other races and in speaking of them either as individuals or as nations.

While people either within or without our borders remain in economic, mental or spiritual bondage, we cannot be true to the obligation which our common heritage imposes upon us without doing our utmost to give them assistance and cooperation in obtaining equitable opportunities for growth.

ESTABLISHMENT AND RELATION OF MEETINGS

In addition to Meetings for Worship, Meetings for Business have been organized to provide for the orderly care of such matters as are essential to maintaining a religious society. These meetings afford opportunity for the appointment of members to special service, for hearing reports of members or committees thus appointed, for encouraging Friends to plan together, under Divine guidance, for carrying on work which will assist in bringing about the coming of the kingdom of God on earth.

For the effectual support of good order, the various business meetings have their several allotments of service. Both our individual members and the corporate groups are strengthened in faith and practice by prompt and regular attendance at these meetings.

Meetings and their relation to one another are as follows: first, Monthly Meetings, in which membership is recorded and which report to Quarterly Meetings (Monthly Meetings may be sub-divided into Preparative Meetings, comprising the members of a particular Monthly Meeting for Worship, and certain business may be referred to them if this course seems best adapted for effective work); second, Quarterly and Half-Yearly Meetings, consisting of two or more Monthly Meetings, which report to the Yearly Meeting (sitting annually); third, the Yearly Meeting, comprising all of the above Meetings.

The Establishment of Meetings

(1) A Preparative Meeting may be established by a Monthly Meeting if sufficient reason seems to exist for so doing. A definite group of Monthly Meeting members should be selected to assume the responsibility of organizing the Preparative Meeting and reporting frequently to the Monthly Meeting.

(2) A Monthly Meeting may be established, either upon the initiative of the Quarterly Meeting or by its concurrence in a request made by a group of persons desiring to organize such a Meeting. In either case, the Quarterly Meeting should appoint a suitable number of Friends to be present at the organization and to render assistance or advice if needed.

If such a course seems likely to be helpful, the Quarterly Meeting may continue its oversight for a year after the establishment of any new meetings, in order to strengthen and aid the members in profitably carrying the new responsibilities which they have assumed.

(a) If the membership of any Monthly Meeting should consider it advantageous to separate into two Monthly Meetings, or to establish a new Meeting, they should bring the matter before the Quarterly Meeting, it should direct that an approved group of members be set off to constitute the new Monthly Meetings and appoint a committee to be present at the organization and to assist in making necessary property adjustments between the two Meetings.

(b) If a group of Friends, members of various Monthly Meetings, desires to organize a Monthly Meeting, they should bring their request before the Quarterly Meeting with which they wish to be associated and, if the request be approved, these members may proceed to select officers in accordance with our Discipline. The Quarterly Meeting which approved the request is directed to appoint a committee to be present and assist, if necessary, in the organization of the new Meeting. Each member of the Meeting shall request transfer of certificate of membership from his or her Monthly Meeting to be forwarded to the newly appointed Clerk.

(c) If a group of persons, not Friends nor residents in the neighborhood of any Friends Meeting, become interested in the principles of Friends and believe it would benefit their religious life to be organized as a Friends Meeting, and affiliated officially with the body, the following procedure is advised:

They should lay their request before the most convenient Quarterly Meeting for advice and counsel. If this Quarterly Meeting, after due investigation, believes that it would be suitable for the group to be organized into a Monthly Meeting, it should appoint a committee to assist in forming an organization according to our Discipline. After the officers are chosen, the clerk shall record the names of those desiring to be members. It

is advised that at this meeting suitable portions of the Discipline be read and that the new members be admonished to study carefully the Book of Discipline in order that they may be familiar with our regular procedure.

(3) A Quarterly Meeting may be established either upon the initiative of the Yearly Meeting or upon approval of the Yearly Meeting of a request from one or more Monthly Meetings, or from a Quarterly Meeting that desires to be divided into two Quarterly Meetings. The Yearly Meeting, in either case, should appoint a committee to be present and assist if necessary in the organization.

(4) Friends are encouraged to hold Meetings for Worship wherever a sufficient number of interested persons can be gathered together for this purpose. If it seems desirable to hold regular Meetings for Worship at places where no Meetings for Business are held, they should be placed under the care of the most convenient Monthly Meeting (or Meetings, if thought desirable, when more than one is represented in the group). Committees of oversight should be appointed by the Monthly Meeting or Meetings. Meetings thus organized are called Indulged Meetings.

Discontinuance of Meetings

If it becomes desirable, in the judgment of the constituent members of any Meeting, to discontinue it, or to unite with another, the request should be laid before the Meeting to which it reports. The request should be considered and, if approved, a committee should be appointed to assist in making the necessary business arrangements, and in the case of the closing of a Monthly Meeting, to arrange for the proper transfer of individual memberships to another Meeting. Information of such action should be forwarded promptly through the proper channels to the Yearly Meeting.

A Preparative Meeting should not be discontinued, nor suspended, without first consulting the Monthly Meeting of which it forms a part; a Monthly Meeting should, in like manner, obtain the approval of the Quarterly Meeting, and a Quarterly Meeting should refer a similar request to the Yearly Meeting.

For the proper disposition of Meeting property when a Meeting is discontinued, see the section on Reversion of Property on page 41.

THE MONTHLY MEETING

Functions

The Monthly Meeting is the fundamental working unit of the Society. It receives and records names of members, extends spiritual care and, if necessary, material aid to its membership. It provides for the oversight of marriages and funerals; for dealing, in a spirit of restoring love, with those who fail to live in accordance with our principles and testimonies; for removing names from the membership list, if this course seems necessary; for the collection of funds required to carry on the work of the Meetings; and for holding titles to property and the suitable administration of trust funds. The concern of any member for extending the work of the Society of Friends into any new field, or for taking up specific work under the care of a particular Meeting, may be suitably introduced into a Monthly Meeting. A Monthly Meeting is free to undertake any work and to assume any function consistent with our testimonies, and not specifically referred to Quarterly or Yearly Meeting.

The purpose of a Preparative Meeting was originally to prepare the digest business for the Monthly Meeting. In some cases, this original need still exists. It is advised that, as far as practicable, business be centered in the Monthly Meeting.

Special sessions of the Monthly Meeting may be called by the Committee of Overseers.

Organization

Each Monthly Meeting shall annually name a suitable person to serve the Meeting as Clerk. The duty of the clerk shall be to conduct all business sessions of the Meeting, to see that a full and correct record of all proceedings is kept, and to carry out the instructions of the Meeting on all matters pertaining to the complete accomplishment of its business.

Assistants to the clerk may be appointed if needed.

A Treasurer shall be appointed to perform the usual service expected of such an officer, and shall be governed by such rules as Meetings think suitable for the safe and orderly holding and disbursement of funds. The treasurer shall report regularly to the Meeting and accounts shall be audited annually.

Each Meeting shall annually provide for the transmission, reception and acknowledgement of communications sent from, or to, the Meeting. This need may be met either by naming the clerk as correspondent, or by appointment of a separate officer. The names of correspondents of each Monthly Meeting shall be forwarded annually with the State of the Meeting report to the Quarterly Meeting.

One or more Recorders shall be appointed to keep a record of memberships and transfers thereof, births, marriages and deaths, according to the forms furnished by the Executive Committee of the Yearly Meeting. Each Meeting may appoint a committee of Ministry and Counsel or not less than four suitable persons, and a Committee of Overseers of not less than four suitable persons. If desired, the duties of this latter committee may become the responsibility of the former committee.

The Meeting may also appoint other standing committees, each charged with particular services. All appointments should be for definite terms and may be so arranged that only a portion of each committee need be appointed at one time.

Trustees³⁶

Friends recognize that all worldly property belongs to God and that we are merely its stewards. In some cases to meet the requirements of the law, a number of individuals are named as the legally responsible agents for real property or a financial asset. These **trustees** exist to fulfill the requirements of financial institutions and state and local governments. Although they may be the legal owners of a meeting's property, they are the agents of the meeting and subject to the authority of the business meeting in all matters. To prevent problems, all legal correspondence should be directed to the Meeting's mailing address.

Outreach

Many seekers were brought into membership by the power of the early Meetings for Worship and the example of Friends' lives. In addition Friends wrote and spoke vigorously of the possibility for the transformation of human lives by the immediate presence of the Inward Light of Christ.

If we experience the creative energy and power of God in our lives then we too will want to share it with the many seekers in our society, interpreting it with flexibility and freedom, as an encounter with the spirit of love, truth and light, for which the only available name is God.

³⁶ Approved in OVYM sessions, June 17, 2017

In activities prompted by our testimonies we should find ways to make known the spiritual basis of our actions. We need to remember that many people have only a limited knowledge of our Society and may not know our manner of worship, which might well speak to their condition.

Membership³⁷

Meaning & Responsibilities of Membership

Membership in the Religious Society of Friends has been called an “outward sign of an inner experience of the living God and of unity with the other members of a living body” (*Faith and Practice of New England Yearly Meeting of Friends*, 1985, p. 235). Membership expresses a commitment to the Religious Society of Friends, founded on the belief that God is actively guiding the individual and the community of faith. Becoming a member expresses outwardly an inward leading toward spiritual enlightenment and growth. When a meeting accepts a person into membership, the meeting and the new member enter into a long-term spiritually based covenant relationship.

Membership entails several responsibilities including bearing faithful testimony to the guiding principles of the Religious Society of Friends and giving of one’s energy, time, and financial resources, as one is able. Members are expected to faithfully attend meeting for worship and meeting for business, and are encouraged to participate in quarterly and yearly meeting activities. Members should be willing to enter into a process of loving discernment with the meeting to seek where their gifts and talents can be most helpful. Such service may include pastoral care, religious education, witness to the broader community, or involvement in the broader Quaker world.

The Role of Attenders

There are those who manifest a continuing interest in the life of the meeting, but have not entered into formal membership. Friends welcome the participation of such active attenders in activities of the meeting, offer them guidance and instruction in Quakerism, and nurture their spiritual growth. Active attenders, nourished through their involvement with the meeting, familiar with and enriched by Friends’ basic beliefs and practices, and willing to undertake greater responsibilities within the meeting are encouraged to apply for membership.

Preparation for Membership

Friends consider membership to be a serious relationship to be entered into after careful discernment. It is generally recommended that an individual considering application for membership attend meeting for worship and meeting for business regularly, seek service on a meeting committee, and undertake a personal study of Quaker faith and practice. Prospective applicants for membership need not delay application fearing they have not yet attained a particular level of spirituality. Becoming a member is intended to mark the beginning of a long-term commitment to a way of life, not its ultimate completion.

Application Process

Those who desire to become members of the Religious Society of Friends should apply to the monthly meeting they attend by submitting a letter stating this request to the clerk of the Committee for Ministry and Counsel. The Committee will then appoint a clearness committee to meet with the applicant. The clearness committee should include one or more members of the Committee for Ministry and Counsel and may include other seasoned members of the meeting. The members of the committee will hold worshipful discussions with the applicant as often and for as long as necessary for all to reach unity regarding the rightness of the relationship and the readiness of the applicant for membership. During the clearness committee’s deliberations, applications for membership should generally be treated as confidential.

³⁷ Approved in OVYM Sessions, July 31, 2009

After meeting with the candidate, the clearness committee reports its findings to the Committee for Ministry and Counsel. When clearness to move forward with an application is reached, the Committee for Ministry and Counsel should report the recommendation for membership to the next regularly appointed monthly meeting for business. The committee's report is to be recorded in a minute, but no action on the application is to be taken at that meeting for business. At this time Friends are encouraged to get to know the applicant if they have not done so earlier, and Friends who have questions or reservations about the applicant should explore these with the Committee for Ministry and Counsel. At the following regular monthly meeting for business, Friends should consider the application for membership and, if prepared to do so, should approve it, recording the action in a minute. The individual thereby becomes a member of the monthly meeting and of the quarterly and yearly meetings of which the monthly meeting is a constituent member. It is customary for Friends to appoint a committee to welcome the individual into membership.

If it becomes clear during the application process to the applicant, to the clearness committee, or to both that membership is not advisable or not advisable at this time, the application may be withdrawn. Friends are advised to respond lovingly to such applications, encouraging the applicant to continue attendance and participation in the life of the meeting. Those whose applications are withdrawn may be led to reapply for membership at a later time. Membership itself is not as important as the spiritual growth of the prospective member.

Dual Membership

Membership is a major commitment to participate in a particular community of Friends, and full participation in two religious bodies at once is usually impractical. Dual membership is generally discouraged. Except in unusual circumstances, a member of Ohio Valley Yearly Meeting belongs to a particular monthly meeting and should not hold full membership in another religious body, including another monthly meeting.

Sojourning Membership

When Friends find themselves temporarily residing away from their home meeting, they may wish to be released from most of the usual responsibilities of membership in the home meeting and be willing to take on such responsibilities in their new location. Such Friends may ask their home meeting to issue a sojourning minute, which is then conveyed to the Clerk of the new meeting. Upon acceptance of the Friend as a Sojourning member, the Clerk of the new meeting will inform the Clerk of the home meeting. Sojourning members are considered fully participating members and may serve the new meeting in whatever ways are fitting. However, the primary financial responsibility of these members will remain with their home meeting, and they will also be counted in their home meeting's statistical report. Sojourning status ends when the Sojourner leaves and the Clerk of the new meeting notifies the home meeting. Friends who find that their stay is longer than two years should seriously consider transferring their membership.

Transfer of Membership

It is recommended that a member who moves away from his or her monthly meeting seek a new meeting where he or she can assume full responsibilities of membership. When such a meeting is found, the Friend will ask the home meeting to issue a certificate of transfer. Upon verifying that the applicant is a member, the home meeting's Committee for Ministry and Counsel brings the request before the monthly meeting for approval. Once issued, the certificate of transfer is conveyed to the Clerk of the new monthly meeting, where it should be referred to the Committee for Ministry and Counsel for review. When prepared to do so, the Committee for Ministry and Counsel brings forward the request to the monthly meeting. Upon approval, the Friend is recorded as a member of the new meeting, and the other meeting is notified of this action. Until this is done, the Friend remains a member

of the other meeting. The new monthly meeting should appoint one or more Friends to welcome the transferred member.

Termination of Membership

Membership in the Religious Society of Friends can be terminated in cases of (a) resignation, (b) loss of interest in membership, or (c) disownment, each of which is explained below. Termination of membership becomes effective only when a record to this effect is made in the minutes of the monthly meeting of which that person is a member. One whose membership has been discontinued and who desires to be reinstated may be received into membership in accordance with the procedure for admitting new members.

RESIGNATION

A member wishing to resign his or her membership should address a letter of resignation to the Clerk of the monthly meeting. The Clerk should refer the letter to the Committee for Ministry and Counsel. Normally, a resignation should not be accepted until after a visit (or exchange of correspondence) to inquire sensitively into the matter. If the member does not re-consider, the Committee for Ministry and Counsel should report this to the meeting, and the meeting should release that Friend from membership. The Clerk should inform the former member in writing of the action.

LOSS OF INTEREST IN MEMBERSHIP

Membership entails participation in the life of one's monthly meeting as a spiritual community. Meetings and their members share a mutual commitment to each other's spiritual wellbeing. When Friends become concerned about a member who has not attended meeting for worship or communicated with the meeting, the Committee for Ministry and Counsel should contact him or her, expressing the meeting's care and loving concern. Friends should seek through the grace of God and the spirit of divine love to restore this Friend to regular fellowship with the community and to provide assistance and support, if possible. In some cases, it may be necessary for Friends to approach the individual repeatedly. If, after sincere and diligent effort, restoration of interest in the meeting is unsuccessful, the monthly meeting may adopt a minute removing him or her from membership. The meeting should, if possible, inform the individual of this action.

DISOWNMENT

A member whose conduct or publicly expressed views repeatedly undermine Friends' testimonies should be labored with lovingly and patiently for as long as there is reasonable hope of restoring unity with the fellowship. No judgment should be placed hastily or in the spirit of condemnation. Monthly meetings, however, have authority to record a minute of disunity with such a person's actions.

In rare and exceptional circumstances, the meeting also has the authority to terminate a person's membership through disownment. This process begins when the Committee for Ministry and Counsel brings forward to the monthly meeting a minute justifying a recommendation of disownment. If the monthly meeting agrees to proceed with the recommendation, the member should be promptly notified of the charges in writing and should be given an opportunity to present his or her case to the meeting at a called meeting for business devoted exclusively to this matter. The monthly meeting should assure itself that all possible steps to aid the member's return to unity with the meeting have been taken, remembering that all persons are subject to error and that love and forgiveness may restore unity. After careful consideration, but without undue delay, the meeting may approve a minute terminating membership. In that case, a copy of the minute should be delivered to the individual along with notification of the right to appeal. A disowned person is released from the rights and responsibilities of membership; however, disownment does not mean a severing of all relationship between the meeting and the disowned person. Friends are encouraged to treat this person with loving kindness.

APPEALS

If anyone believes that the monthly meeting has rendered an unjust judgment against him or her, that person may appeal to the quarterly meeting. The individual making the appeal should promptly notify the Clerk of the quarterly meeting and the Clerk of the monthly meeting. The quarterly meeting is then to refer the case to a suitable committee, excluding Friends from the monthly meeting involved. The monthly meeting should appoint a committee to represent it in the appeals process and should provide the quarterly meeting's appeals committee with copies of all minutes having a bearing on the case. The appeals committee should meet with both parties, prayerfully consider the case, and report its recommendation to the following quarterly meeting. The quarterly meeting shall consider the recommendation, confirm or reverse the original judgment, or return the case to the monthly meeting for further consideration. Care should be taken to inform the person making the appeal and the monthly meeting of the decision, either of which, if dissatisfied, may appeal to the Yearly Meeting for further hearing. In the case of such an appeal, the Yearly Meeting shall in like manner refer the appeal to a suitable committee, excluding Friends from the quarterly meeting involved. This committee shall meet with the individual and representatives from the monthly meeting and the quarterly meeting, have access to all relevant minutes, and make a recommendation to the Yearly Meeting. The Yearly Meeting will then uphold or reverse the original decision, and Yearly Meeting's decision will be final. At either level of appeal, parties may agree to accept the judgment of the appeals committee and not bring the matter before the entire meeting body.

Youth Membership³⁸

Friends' communities rest on a principle of equality and on the worth of every individual. We value and welcome the young people who attend our meetings and participate in the lives of our communities. At the same time, our faith rests on deep personal and individual experience, and membership in the Religious Society of Friends and in a particular monthly meeting calls for a serious commitment. One person cannot make this commitment for another, and a caregiver cannot make this commitment for a young child. In order to accommodate both of these spiritual insights, Ohio Valley Yearly Meeting presents the following procedures as a model to consider. These procedures recognize both youth membership and adult membership and outline a process for transition to adult membership. Regardless of a Friend's age, the term youth membership as used here is understood as membership requested by another on that Friend's behalf, while the term adult membership is understood as membership requested by that Friend directly.

Members who are parents or those with parental responsibility intending to bring up a child in accordance with Friends' faith and practice may request youth membership for the child. Monthly meetings may accept minor children as youth members at the request of one or both of their parents or guardians. The Committee for Ministry and Counsel should approach members who are new parents and parents requesting transfer of membership and ask if they would like to request youth membership for their children. Likewise, the membership clearness process for new members who are parents should include the children in the discussion of membership. When the monthly meeting accepts a child into youth membership, the child will also be considered a youth member of the relevant quarterly meeting and of Ohio Valley Yearly Meeting.

Children must ultimately make their own decision about adult membership. Youth members may request transition to adult membership at any time they feel ready to do so, by writing a simple letter to the Committee for Ministry and Counsel. Ohio Valley Yearly Meeting recommends that monthly meetings appoint membership clearness committees for youth members seeking transition to adult membership, following the same procedures set forth above for new membership.

To help prepare children for making this decision, the meeting should teach children about the meaning and responsibilities of membership. This process includes teaching children how to enter into waiting worship and how to participate in the Spirit-led Quaker business process, giving them opportunities to accept responsibilities

³⁸ Approved in OVYM Sessions, July 30, 2010

such as participation on committees as they are able, and encouraging them to participate in youth groups associated with quarterly meetings, Ohio Valley Yearly Meeting, and Friends General Conference.

When parents or other adult Friends sense that a young person may be ready for adult membership, they should encourage the youth member to consider taking this step. The Committee for Ministry and Counsel should send a letter to each youth member around age 16, expressing appreciation for the young person's gifts and growing spiritual maturity and encouraging him or her to consider whether the time is right to request adult membership. Ministry and Counsel should continue to send letters to the youth member every two or three years between the ages of 16 and 25. The youth member should be asked to make a decision by his or her 25th birthday.

If a youth member has not requested adult membership by age 25, youth membership status ends, and the monthly meeting will minute that action. Should a youth member of any age inform the meeting that he or she does not wish to remain a member of the Religious Society of Friends, Ministry and Counsel is advised to seek discernment regarding the appropriate course of action in that individual case. However, if the youth member is clear about resignation, the monthly meeting will minute that the individual's youth membership has ended. These young people should be warmly assured that they are welcome to continue as active attenders, that they may at any time request membership, and that the meeting will continue to support them with loving care.

Friends recognize that monthly meetings may discern alternative procedures concerning membership of children. Whatever procedures are adopted should reflect Friends' sense of loving concern and responsibility for children, as well as our belief in the value of raising children as part of a spiritual community.

Recorded Ministers

Until 1928 Indiana Yearly Meeting recognized the gift of vocal ministry by identifying such Friends as *recorded ministers*. This had been a long accepted custom among Friends, and without doubt it served a useful purpose. From time to time it seems desirable to alter somewhat our practices and procedures, and the question arises whether or not the term "minister" might not include more in Quaker terminology than speaking in Meeting for Worship. With the changes that are occurring in society today, a vital human ministry is performed outside the Meeting for Worship—in the family, in the Meeting, and in the community—by spiritually motivated Friends. Friends today volunteer their services in work for social betterment of minorities, improvement of living conditions, public health, penal reform, peace, and other meeting and community concerns with a spiritual basis. "This method of such human service...must be a method that is consistent *with the way and spirit of love*. Its way is deeply sacrificial and costly. It gives and shares, not merely goods and money, but life itself. It enters sympathetically and with an understanding mind into the heart and condition of those who suffer and who are to be helped. It travails and suffers with them and it aims in the end to make a different world through its love and its effort."³⁹

Some Friends hold the view that it is permissible to broaden the term *minister* to include those who volunteer to serve the poor, the defenseless, the suffering, the poor in spirit, and others of similar needs. It is optional for each Monthly Meeting to request of the Yearly Meeting its approval to record as ministers any members who have a special gift of service to the Meeting or community. These recordings should be reviewed from time to time by the Monthly Meeting for continued usefulness.

Letter of Introduction

A member of the Monthly Meeting may have occasion to travel and may wish to make contact with other members of the Society of Friends. The Monthly Meeting clerk may write a letter of introduction stating that the person is a member in good standing. The letter may also convey love from the Meeting in those visited by the traveler. This letter may be presented by the traveler to those Friends whom she or he may visit.

³⁹ Philadelphia Yearly Meeting Faith and Practice, 1955, p. 112.

Traveling Minute

When Friends feel called to religious service beyond their own Monthly Meeting, or to visit the families therein, they should first lay the matter before their Monthly Meeting, stating so far as can be foreseen, the whole nature of the proposed service. If the Monthly Meeting feels free to unite with the concern, it shall make a minute to that effect and furnish the Friends with a copy thereof.

When the service is directed outside of the Friend's own Quarterly Meeting or Yearly Meeting, the Quarterly Meeting or Yearly Meeting (or its Executive Committee) should be informed of the concern. If the Quarterly or Yearly Meeting approves, it should endorse the Monthly Meeting's minute, or issue a minute by its own clerks, indicating its approval.

After the accomplishment of such services, the Meetings which have granted the minutes should be promptly notified and their documents returned to them without delay. Friends returning minutes should report on their visits for the information and encouragement of the Meetings which have supported them in their concerns. Any Meeting which grants minutes for travel should take care that, as far as possible, the service is not hindered for lack of sufficient funds.

Clerks of Meetings should recognize and endorse the traveling minute carried by a visiting Friend.

Committees

As soon as practicable after committees are appointed, the first person named should call the committee together to choose its officers and plan to carry out the duties of its appointment. All standing committees should meet regularly.

A period of worship at the opening and closing of a committee meeting or a Meeting for Business will be found to deepen the unity of the group assembled.

Committee on Ministry and Counsel

Duties

The direct responsibility of this committee is to foster the spiritual life of our Meetings for Worship. This responsibility must be borne in humility of spirit, with confidence that the power of God working in us will give us the ability to lead our members to greater consecration in worship and vocal ministry and will also open to us new avenues of usefulness.

Though vocal ministry serves an important purpose, we must be constantly mindful that the opportunity for silent communion with God is the basis on which our meetings are held. Should this quiet period be unduly limited by excess of vocal expression, this committee should call attention to our need for silent worship, and continue its efforts until the meetings afford a satisfactory opportunity for individual worship. It should also advise those who may be inclined to speak unacceptably, or at undue length, or with too great frequency, with prompt and loving counsel.

The committee should be mindful that there are differences in mental training, fluency of expression and power of interpretation. None should hesitate because of inexperience, for the spirit of the message is more than the form, and the example of one struggling to be faithful in a difficult task may be more helpful than the most polished address. The committee should be watchful that the experienced speaker does not speak with such frequency that the Meeting comes to look on that person as its minister. All messages should be adapted to the spiritual needs of those present. This cannot be the case unless those who undertake to speak are earnest seekers of God's purpose. Since the effect of a message depends much upon its timeliness, those who feel prompted to speak should make

this point a matter of thought that their utterance may be in season and in harmony with the spirit of the Meeting. This is of special importance in a large gathering, where many accustomed to speak are present.

Quiet and reverent assembling is a suitable beginning of a Meeting for Worship. The committee should see that this condition prevails.

Upon the Committee of Ministry and Counsel rests the responsibility of inspiring the membership to faithfulness in attendance at meetings and in responding to Divine promptings. They should be alert to help all to a forgetfulness of self, and should be ever ready to counsel and assist to larger and fuller usefulness those who show a desire to be of service.

As the occasion arises, the committee should propose to the Monthly Meeting that a member be recommended to the Yearly Meeting as a recorded minister. (See the section on Recorded Ministers on page 34.)

The membership of a meeting may be stimulated to greater faithfulness by the visits of members of other meetings, who often bring valuable spiritual insights. It may also be helpful to a meeting if its members, individually or in groups, visit other Meetings for Worship.

Reports

It is recommended that reports concerning the spiritual condition and needs of the Meetings for Worship under its care, together with an account of its own efforts to meet those needs, be made at least once a year by each Committee of Ministry and Counsel. A report of the Monthly Meeting's Committee of Ministry and Counsel should be made to the Monthly Meeting and, after approval, should also be presented to its superior meeting. This annual report is known as the State of the Meeting report. It is recommended that this formal report be made to the larger groups at meetings immediately preceding the Yearly Meeting, and that the other meetings held in conjunction with Quarterly Meetings be largely devotional conferences. Yet it may often be profitable to make more frequent reports in order to appeal to all members of the Meeting to carry out the important concerns which the Committee of Ministry and Counsel has special care.

In preparing reports the committee may be aided in its deliberations by considering some of all of the following questions, though definite answers to them need not be forwarded.

1. Does your Meeting assemble quietly and reverently?
2. Do most of your resident members attend and apparently find the Meeting valuable?
3. Are members disposed to assist according to their ability in making meetings profitable?
4. Do your members feel a lack of vocal ministry where little or none exists? How do they think this lack can be met?
5. Is care taken to keep the basic principles of Friends, worship clearly before your members? What effort does your committee make to help the membership understand and appreciate a silent meeting?

Principles for Guidance

The principles stated in the section on Religious Expression of the Discipline are commended for the guidance of the committee members in the performance of their duties. They should be read as a whole or in part at each stated meeting of the committee. It may frequently be desirable to consider certain divisions of the subject very carefully rather than to review the entire subject.

Committee of Overseers

As indicated previously, the duties of this committee may be assigned to the Committee on Ministry and Counsel.

It is important for the best interest of each meeting that the Committee of Overseers be selected with due regard to fitness for the specific duties expected of them. They should represent the active, concerned elements of the meeting, and should feel a responsibility for the welfare of the Society. Age should not be a determining factor in appointment, but only men and women of good judgment and real interest in their fellow members should serve in this important capacity.

Duties

Pastoral care of the membership is the essential responsibility of the Committee of Overseers. It should encourage all members to a faithful performance of their duties.⁴⁰

The Overseers should seek to have all members work cooperatively for the strengthening of the Meeting. If a member repeatedly disregards Friends' principles and/or the obligations of membership, Overseers, in a spirit of loving concern, should counsel with the member and endeavor to effect a change in the relationship with the Meeting which will be in keeping with Friends' ways. If their labors are unavailing, they should bring the matter to the attention of the Monthly Meeting with a report of their efforts.⁴¹

Overseers are advised to give specific attention to the education of our youth toward an understanding of our principles and testimonies.

The Committee of Overseers or a committee appointed by them is responsible for implementing the procedure for membership as stated in the Section on Application for Membership.

To those who attend Meetings for Worship, manifest an interest in our principles, and might with profit to themselves and the Meeting become members of our religious Society, it is recommended that overseers and other concerned Friends give loving attention with a view to their becoming members. Friends should also take pains to let people feel welcome and should find appropriate ways of letting people know about the Society of Friends.

The marriage of a member is a matter which should come to the attention of the Committee of Overseers, whether or not it is accomplished under care of the Meeting. It is recommended that if the Friendly procedure is desired when one of our members is to marry a non-member, the Committee of Overseers should visit the non-member and then make recommendation to the Monthly Meeting as to the propriety of procedure. They should also extend to the non-member an invitation to unite with our Society, for in this way our body may be strengthened and the religious harmony of the family preserved.

If the Friendly procedure has not been observed, the Committee of Overseers should at once visit the newly founded family and ascertain whether the member is in sympathy with Friends' testimonies and expects to attend our meeting.

The Committee should also learn whether the non-member would like to join our Society, at the same time extending to him, or her, an invitation to attend our Meetings for Worship. The committee should report the result to Monthly Meeting.

Concern for Members' Needs

There have been some times in the Quaker experience when some members and their families have need added consideration and compassion from the Society because their commitment to Quaker principles has resulted in imprisonment or other forms of hardship. When this need surfaced, Meetings frequently named a Committee for Sufferings to serve as advisors and to make sure physical, emotion and spiritual needs were met.

⁴⁰ See Sections on Religious Fellowship and Monthly Meetings for paragraphs on Responsibilities of Membership.

⁴¹ See Section on Termination of Membership.

There are still occasions when a Committee for Sufferings may be appropriate. Members should be sensitive to the persuasions of their membership and ready to release individuals to witness in whatever manner they feel called. This may mean taking on the care of a family, giving public support to the witness, or simply helping the individual to clarify priorities.

When an individual wishes to clarify or rethink a position in relation to Friends' principles, a Committee for Clearness may be suggested by members of the Meeting or requested by the individual. The Committee of Overseers assumes the responsibility of naming the committee, in consultation with the individual concerned. Areas in which clearness may be sought could include consideration of marriage, problems in an existing marriage, stands to be taken on public issues, unusual changes in employment, tension between members, or any condition which signals an emotional, spiritual or financial change in one's life.

Members of such a committee should take care to exercise discretion in revealing confidences which may be shared with them.

Marriage Procedure⁴²

(Read the Section on Close Relationships)

The covenant of marriage is solemn in its obligation, fundamental in its social significance, and should be lifelong in its duration. When a Meeting assumes oversight of a marriage, it makes an enduring commitment to support and strengthen that marriage. The Meeting is asked not only to approve the wedding and see it performed in good order but also to care for and share in the marriage and help in its success with advice and counsel. Friends consider that asking a Meeting to take a marriage under its care places responsibilities on both the couple and the Meeting.

For its proper accomplishment under the care of our Society, the following procedure is recommended:

1. The couple proposing marriage should communicate their intentions to the Monthly Meeting under whose care the wedding will be held by writing a letter, signed by them both, requesting the meeting's approval for marriage.
2. The Ministry & Counsel Committee will then name a Clearness Committee to meet with the couple. When one or both members of the couple is a member of another religious community, an invitation may be extended to them to participate in the clearness process.
3. The Clearness Committee will meet one or more times with the couple to determine their readiness for marriage. The couple is part of the committee and participates in this discernment.
4. If the Clearness Committee recommends approval, this is presented to the next Monthly Meeting for Business for its approval. The Monthly Meeting should approve that the marriage be carried out.
5. Two or more Friends are appointed by the Monthly Meeting to have care and oversight of the wedding. Proposed names for the Oversight Committee may be brought forward by the couple.
6. The wedding is held under the care of the Meeting.
7. This Oversight Committee shall report to the next Monthly Meeting concerning the following: the observance of good order in the wedding, delivery of the marriage certificate or duplicate to the recorder of the Monthly Meeting for recording, compliance with legal requirements and the names assumed or retained by the couple.

Clearness Committee

The Clearness Committee for a proposed marriage was originally intended to determine if the couple was clear of any obstacles to marriage. It inquired into the character and obligations of the couple, compliance with the provisions of state laws, and to see that the rights and feelings of any children were taken into account. Contemporary committees assume a broader role: searching deeply into the relationship of the couple and helping

⁴² Approved in OVYM sessions, June 17, 2017

them determine their readiness for the commitments of marriage. If one or both of the partners has been divorced, the committee should determine that the special challenges of re-marriage have been carefully considered. The committee should help the couple explore questions and areas of their relationship that they perhaps have not considered. Such a procedure is intended to enable the couple to understand as fully as possible the new relationship into which they may enter, as well as to identify their own expectations and capabilities. The committee obviously cannot present all of the possibilities of a marriage to a couple, nor can all potential problems be considered, but deep searching in a spirit of love and tender seeking can help the couple find a better understanding of the roles and responsibilities of marriage.

Marriage of Two Non-Members

When two non-members request oversight of their marriage, the Ministry & Counsel Committee should inquire into the reasons for the request. If the Committee approves the Meeting's assuming the responsibility, they shall bring their recommendation to Monthly Meeting. If the Monthly Meeting agrees to the oversight of the marriage, a Clearness Committee shall be appointed. This Committee shall proceed in the manner of Friends, with the same care as when one or both parties are members of the Society of Friends.

Marriage Ceremony

When a marriage has been authorized and the meeting is gathered at which it is to be accomplished, it is advised that a period of silent worship be observed, during which the parties to the marriage should rise, and taking each other by the hand, each should declare in words to this effect: "In the presence of God and before these, our friends, I take (you/thee), _____, to be my (husband/wife/spouse), promising, with Divine assistance, to be unto (you/thee) a loving and faithful (husband/wife/spouse), as long as we both shall live."

After these declarations, the marriage certificate should be signed by the couple and read by someone from the Oversight Committee. Worship should continue and the meeting closed by the Oversight Committee.

Changes may take place in wedding forms and procedures with the approval of the Oversight Committee. The marriage certificate may be modified and the wedding may be planned to suit the needs of the couple.

Form of Certificate

The form of the certificate may follow one of these examples:

TRADITIONAL CERTIFICATE EXAMPLE:

Whereas, A.B, of _____, child of C.B. and D.B., of _____, and E.F., child of G.F. and H.F., of _____, having declared their intentions of marriage to each other to _____ Monthly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends, held at _____, according to the good order used among Friends, their proposed marriage was approved by that Meeting.

Now this is to certify to whom it may concern, that for the accomplishment of their intentions, this _____ day of the _____ month, in the year of our Lord _____, during an appointed Meeting for Worship, A.B. and E.F., appeared in a meeting of the Religious Society of Friends, held at _____; and taking one another by the hand, did on this solemn occasion declare that they took each other in marriage, promising with Divine assistance to be loving and faithful spouses to one another, as long as they both shall live. And, moreover, they, A.B. and E.F. did, as a further confirmation thereof, then and there, to these present set their hands.

We, whose names are also signed below, being present at the said marriage, have, as witnesses thereunto, set our hands the day and year above written.

Contemporary Certificate Example:

R.B. of..., child of F.W.B. and V.H.B. of ..., and C.S. of..., child of T.W.S. and R.G.S. of ..., declared their intention to marry each other, to the ... Monthly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends. Their proposed marriage was approved by that Meeting.

On the ... day of the ... month of the year ..., during an appointed Meeting for Worship, R.B. and C.S. declared that they took one another in marriage, promising with Divine assistance to be loving and faithful spouses to one another as long as they both shall live.

R. and C. in an outward and visible confirmation of the marriage then signed this certificate.

We who have signed this certificate have witnessed this marriage while worshipping together.

Approved in OVYM sessions, June 17, 2017

Burial Grounds

It is directed that two or more Friends be appointed by Monthly or Preparative Meetings to have the care of our burying grounds and see that interments are made in accordance with the rules approved by the Meeting which owns the grounds.

Careful marking of all graves for purposes of identification should be practiced and records thereof kept. Our principles of moderation and simplicity should be strictly observed in marking graves; in accordance with these principles, Monthly and Preparative Meetings should make suitable regulations regarding gravestones.

Meeting Funds

Monthly or Preparative Meetings should raise from their membership and from other sources a fund sufficient to meet their responsibilities, to expand their interests, to care for their property, and to provide for their obligations to the Quarterly and Yearly Meetings.

The Treasurer of the Yearly Meeting shall determine the proportionate share of the Yearly Meeting budget for each local meeting, and shall so notify each meeting.

Meeting Trusts and Property Titles

Yearly, Quarterly, Monthly and Preparative Meetings are advised to require annual reports of the Income and disbursements of all trusts and of the investment of the principal thereof, including the status of titles of Meeting properties and burial grounds vested in the Trustees, who are to keep in their records accurate statements of the terms of the trusts held by them for the benefit of the meeting or of the Society at large.

Business meetings are cautioned to see that timely care is taken for the renewal of trusts. They are exhorted to be diligent and particular as to the careful investment of trust funds. The assistance of the Executive Committee may be sought if difficulties arise.

Reversion of Property

If a Preparative Meeting ceases to exist, all its records and property shall be transferred and conveyed to the Monthly Meeting of which it is a part. If a Monthly Meeting ceases to exist, all its records and property shall be transferred and conveyed to the Quarterly Meeting of which it is a part. If a Quarterly Meeting ceases to exist, without merging or consolidating with another Quarterly Meeting, all its records and property shall be transferred and conveyed to the Yearly Meeting of which it is a part. If two Monthly Meetings or two Quarterly Meetings merge or consolidate, all the property of both shall be held by the merged Meeting.

Such transfer and conveyance shall be authorized by an appropriate minute, duly recorded, and the assignment, transfer and deed of conveyance shall be executed and delivered by such meetings before such meetings shall be formally laid down or disbanded, or, in the case of merged or consolidated meetings, at the time thereof.

In the event that such action is not taken by such meetings before they are laid down, merged or consolidated, the Monthly Meeting, the Quarterly Meeting, or the Yearly Meeting entitled to receive any such records and property shall be the equitable owner thereof, and shall be entitled forthwith to require the assignment of conveyance of the legal title thereto, to be held by such Monthly, Quarterly, or Yearly Meeting under and upon the same trusts as the records and property have been theretofore held, if it is practicable that such trusts be carried out; otherwise, upon trusts similar thereto as the successor meeting may determine. No records or meeting property shall be distributed or partitioned among the individual members of a meeting.

All moneys invested in the properties referred to having been contributed for the purpose of maintaining meetings and/or burial grounds under the care of Friends, a moral obligation is laid upon us to see that this purpose is served, even though particular meetings may no longer exist. Upon the meetings receiving such property the obligation rests to receive and provide care for properties and burial grounds conveyed to them.

The Executive Committee is directed to assist meetings in placing their meeting properties in suitable trusteeships, if desired. Funds and/or properties may be turned over to the township trustees, historical societies or other appropriate organizations if it is considered that better care will be obtained in this manner than through the Yearly Meeting structure.

Incorporation

To avoid lapse resulting from the death of trustees holding title to meeting properties and trusts, it is advised that such titles and trusts be held by corporations when practicable. The Executive Committee will advise with any meeting contemplating incorporation.

Meeting Records

All Meetings for Business should keep full and correct records of their transactions in convenient form for reference. An accurate record of the membership of each Monthly Meeting should be kept which should include all births, marriages, removals and deaths occurring among members.⁴³

A recorder or statistician should be appointed to carry out these duties and the Meeting should furnish suitable books and provide proper places in which to preserve the records. The recorder should also be responsible for forwarding to the Executive Committee of the Yearly Meeting and Friends General Conference a regular updating (at least yearly) of membership with current addresses. When Meeting records cease to be actively used, they should become the property of the Yearly Meeting, and shall be turned over to it for safekeeping.

THE QUARTERLY MEETING

The Quarterly Meeting is designed to bring together for inspiration and counsel a larger group, and to consider more varied interests than any single meeting embraces. It is composed of constituent Monthly Meetings, each of which shall appoint representatives to attend it.

Its form of organization should be similar to that of the Monthly Meeting. It is to receive and forward reports from Monthly Meetings to the Yearly Meeting, and to appoint representatives thereto. It may hold property and trusts and appoint for specific services committees over which it shall have original and final jurisdiction. Its most

⁴³ See Annual Statistical Report.

helpful function should be to aid and encourage the Monthly Meetings composing it to greater interest and service, and to give its members an increasing vision of the truth. It should be diligent in seeking opportunities to gather together groups which may be organized into meetings and should always be ready to help Monthly Meetings whenever they ask for advice or assistance.

THE YEARLY MEETING

The Yearly Meeting shall be composed of its constituent Quarterly or Half-Yearly Meetings and Monthly Meetings. Each Monthly Meeting shall appoint representatives to attend sessions of the Yearly Meeting. These representatives shall perform whatever duties the Yearly Meeting or the Meeting which appoints them may assign. It is advised that they make reports to their respective Monthly Meetings of important action taken by the Yearly Meeting. All members of constituent Monthly Meetings are also members of the Yearly Meeting and have the same privileges as the representatives. The Yearly Meeting shall provide for the appointment of necessary officers, including clerks, and treasurer.

The Yearly Meeting may organize its work through the appointment of committees necessary for the effective carrying out of its concerns. It is cautioned against becoming over-organized and thus expending in merely maintaining a mechanical system, energies which should be conserved for the advancement of truth.

It shall determine, annual, a budget necessary for its expenses and assign to each Monthly Meeting its quota for collection based on total membership.

It shall receive written reports from its committees and from its constituent meetings, signed by the proper officers. It shall review the state of the Society and consider communications addressed to it. It shall hear and act upon the concerns of its members pertaining to the work and influence of the Society of Friends.

It should exercise a general oversight and care of subordinate meetings in things pertaining to the welfare of the Society in general.

The Yearly Meeting shall provide for the due consideration of epistles and of minutes of Friends from other Friends Yearly Meetings.

All letters and papers addressed to the Yearly Meeting, regarding which the clerk desires counsel, may be referred to the Executive Committee, which should consider them and report whether it is advisable to have them presented for the consideration of the Yearly Meeting.

It is advised that the Yearly Meeting have always available information concerning its constituent Meetings, so that it can aid committees in their work, give a knowledge of conditions and extend sympathetic help to the smaller Meetings which need encouragement and assistance from the larger body.

It shall appoint representatives for participating in the work of Friends General Conference and of Friends World Committee for Consultation, American Friends Service Committee and Friends Committee on National Legislation, and to other committees as the need arises.

The Executive Committee

Duties

This committee shall transact business for the Yearly Meeting between its annual sessions in all cases where the welfare of our Society makes this desirable, and shall carry out instructions given it by the Yearly Meeting.

In general its duties should include printing and distributing Friendly literature, furnishing forms to Monthly Meetings for use in keeping records of members, transfers, births, marriages and deaths, maintaining a current list of members with their addresses, endeavoring to extend the knowledge of our principles, rendering advice and assistance to Meetings in the matter of property and trusts, upon their request, and to individuals who feel the need of support in maintaining our testimonies. This Committee shall keep in close and sympathetic touch with other committees appointed by the Yearly Meeting in all cases when that body is not in session, but it shall not make changes in the Book of Discipline or issue any statement of faith.

Meetings

The Committee may fix its own times of meeting, except that its clerk shall call special meetings upon the request of three members of the Committee. The clerk of each Monthly Meeting as well as appointed representatives should be notified of each committee meeting. It is advised that important action be taken only after the judgment of the committee has been obtained.

Minutes

The committee shall keep full and complete minutes and render to the Yearly Meeting reports of all business transacted.

Funds

Drafts may be drawn against the treasury of the Yearly Meeting under proper authorization.

Method of Appointment

Each Monthly Meeting shall appoint for a term of two years by June 1 on each year, one or more members to represent it on this committee. Monthly Meetings appointing two or more representatives shall arrange the terms of office so that half expire each year. The clerk and treasurer of the Yearly Meeting shall also be members of the Executive Committee by reason of their appointments. The Yearly Meeting shall, every fifth year, recommend the proper size of the Executive Committee and the proportion of its membership among the Monthly Meetings, basing its judgment upon the statistical reports received.

The Yearly Meeting, if it wishes to do so, may appoint members at large in addition to those named by the Monthly Meetings.

Nominating Committee

The Executive Committee shall act as the nominating committee of the Yearly Meeting to nominate all officers, including the clerks and members of committees of the Yearly Meeting. The Committee shall meet for this purpose after appointment and at least one month before Yearly Meeting begins in that year and at other times as necessary.

Annual Statistical Report

It is directed that annual reports shall be made by the Monthly Meetings to the Quarterly Meetings and from the Quarterly Meetings to the Yearly Meeting, containing all needed information on a form provided by the Yearly Meeting for the purpose. These forms will be prepared and supplied by the Executive Committee.

The information asked for should include data as to membership (Births, Deaths, Admissions, Removals, etc.), First-day Schools, attenders of Friends Schools, changes in times and places of Meetings, care of record books, reading of queries, etc.

The information shall be for the fiscal year as established by the Yearly Meeting. The Yearly Meeting may from time to time ask for additional information not included on the form.

OTHER QUAKER ORGANIZATIONS⁴⁴

Over the course of the last hundred years, dozens of Quaker organizations have grown up to provide service to Friends and to promote Friends' values in the wider world. OVYM has made financial contributions to many, and members of OVYM meetings were involved in many more. A few of the larger and more influential organizations are listed below. Further information about Quaker organizations can be found on their websites.

Friends General Conference

In 2015 there were 36 yearly meetings and associations in the U.S. and Canada. These are classified in five groups: Friends General Conference, Friends United Meeting, Evangelical Friends-International, Conservative Friends, and several independent yearly meetings. In addition, there is a small but significant number of meetings with no yearly meeting association. Ohio Valley Yearly Meeting is affiliated with Friends General Conference.

FGC emerged from several gatherings among Hicksite Quakers. These started in 1868 with the Biennial First Day School Conference. The Friends Union for Philanthropic Labor began meeting at the same time and in the same location in 1882 and the Friends Educational Conference in 1896. They formally joined together as the Friends General Conference in 1900 as a way of bringing Friends in the United States and Canada together across yearly meeting lines to share their experiences, exchange ideas and develop programs that nurture and stimulate the religious life of the Society of Friends in individual monthly meetings as well as the larger community of Friends.

Seven Hicksite yearly meetings were involved: Indiana (now known as Ohio Valley), Baltimore, Genesee, Illinois, New York, Ohio, and Philadelphia. In 2015, FGC had grown to an association of fourteen yearly meetings, supplemented with regional groups and individual meetings. Its stated purpose is, with Divine guidance, to nurture the spiritual vitality of the Religious Society of Friends by providing programs and services for Friends, meetings, and seekers.

The character and thrust of Friends General Conference has been largely determined by the conviction that the same Spirit that was revealed in the Scriptures can lead men and women today, that Quaker worship should be based on expectant waiting for Divine guidance, and that there is an enriching potential in theological diversity.

Being an association of Meetings, the Friends General Conference has no authority over its constituent Meetings, which fully retain their autonomy. Policy and the program planning of the Conference are determined by a Central Committee appointed by the member yearly meetings. Its annual Gatherings are not business meetings, but conferences to which all Friends are invited.

American Friends Service Committee

Refusal to participate in war has been an enduring Friends' concern ever since George Fox said in 1651 that he "lived in the virtue of that life and power that took away the occasion of all wars." Friends have maintained with consistency, and often with much suffering, the belief that the power of love and the spirit of justice are the only bases for resolving international disputes. World War I sharply questioned the validity of this testimony. Friends found themselves faced with the necessity for profound reconsideration and for active work in support of this great principle. Their most cogent argument was the fearless and impartial service to the victims of war. During the course of the struggle the vision and leadership of Rufus Jones brought together all branches and all types of

⁴⁴ Approved in OVYM Sessions, Jul 18, 2016

Friends in the effort to convey help and a message of love to the people of Europe. This resulted in the founding of the *American Friends Service Committee* on April 30, 1917 by Friends representing several areas of Quakerism. They were deeply concerned for the spiritual values endangered by America's entrance into the war, and to provide constructive, non-military service to young men who were conscientious objectors.

The work of the AFSC has evolved over the last century in response to changing conditions and to reflect the concerns and testimonies of Friends in the United States.

Friends World Committee for Consultation (FWCC)

Friends World Committee for Consultation was established by a minute of a World Conference of the Religious Society of Friends held at Swarthmore, Pennsylvania in 1937. The purpose of the Friends World Committee for Consultation is to encourage fellowship among all the branches of the Religious Society of Friends. To advance this goal, it publishes material of interest to all Quakers, encourages intervisitation, holds conferences and promotes Friends' concerns.

Yearly meetings and similar organized groups of Friends throughout the world who are affiliated with FWCC send representatives to its World Plenary Meetings. A representative Interim Committee is appointed at each meeting to assist staff and officers of the organization's world headquarters, located in London. In addition, Friends World Committee for Consultation has formed geographic sections, which have their own officers and staff to carry on regional concerns: Africa Section; Asia and West Pacific Section; European and Middle East Section; and Section of the Americas.

Quaker United Nations Office (QUNO)

The Friends World Committee for Consultation sponsored the Quaker United Nations Program in 1947. A unique role is played both in New York and Geneva by the Quaker House close to the offices of the United Nations, where delegates from opposing factions can meet informally and search for ways to reconcile their differences. QUNO staff also provide information to Friends about the U.N. and arrange for Friends and others to attend seminars and U.N. sessions so that they may better understand the work of this world organization.

Friends Committee on National Legislation (FCNL)

Founded in 1943 by a group of Friends gathered at Quaker Hill in Richmond, Indiana, the Friends Committee on National Legislation is the oldest religious lobby in Washington D.C. While the FCNL does not speak for all Friends in the United States, its policy-making body consists of appointees from worshipping bodies of Friends throughout the United States. It has long been and continues to be effective in presenting the viewpoints of Friends to members of Congress and to the executive branch of government.

Friends Journal

Quakers have been publishing fliers, pamphlets, and tracts since the 1650s. Periodicals became particularly important to the North American Friends in the 19th century as Quakers settled across the continent and visitation by traveling ministers became more difficult. With the separations of the 1820s and later, Friends in different branches produced publications to serve their own members. Two of these were published by Friends in the two Philadelphia Yearly Meetings: *The Friends Intelligencer* (Hicksite) and *The Friend* (Orthodox). After these meetings reunited in 1955, *Friends Journal* was created as an independent organization, "for the purpose of promoting religious concerns of the Religious Society of Friends and the education and information of its members and others by means of the written or spoken word." In 2015, the Journal had readers in all 50 states and more than 40 other countries.

Quaker Earthcare Witness (QEW)

Originally named *Friends Committee on Unity with Nature*, this organization was established in 1987. A workshop was held at the FGC Gathering that year on the importance of living in harmony with the earth and with all of God's creation. Its name was officially changed to Quaker Earthcare Witness (QEW) in 2003. Although it started at an FGC gathering, the organization works with all Quaker branches.

QEW's purpose is to call on all people to live in right relationship with all Creation, recognizing that the entire world is interconnected and is a manifestation of God. The organization works to integrate into the beliefs and practices of the Religious Society of Friends the Truth that God's Creation is to be respected, protected, and held in reverence in its own right; and the Truth that human aspirations for peace and justice depend upon restoring the earth's ecological integrity. It promotes these Truths by being patterns and examples, by communicating its message, and by providing spiritual and material support to those engaged in the compelling task of transforming our relationship to the earth.

A BRIEF HISTORY⁴⁵

The Beginning of Quakerism

The Religious Society of Friends originated in England at the time of the Puritan Revolution (about 1642-1660). There was a growing sense of personal religious independence among the people that resulted in the temporary overthrow of the monarchy and the installation of Oliver Cromwell as Lord Protector. Dissatisfaction with the established church resulted in many quick-growing, but often short-lived, sects and in a large number of restless, searching spirits.

George Fox, one of the first Quakers, was of this seeking type of mind. Born in 1624, he began when nineteen years old a solitary, spiritual quest for Truth. He recorded in his *Journal* that at last in 1646, "when all my hopes in...all men were gone, so that I had nothing outwardly to help me, nor could tell what to do, then, Oh then, I heard a voice which said, 'There is one, even Christ Jesus, that can speak to thy condition,' and, when I heard it, my heart did leap for joy."⁴⁶

In 1647 Fox began to preach, convincing many people, and in 1648 a whole community in Nottinghamshire accepted his message and, associating together, called themselves Children of the Light, the earliest name by which Friends were known. From this time on, the number of his followers grew rapidly.

Puritan ministers then taught that God's revelation to humanity lay only in the Bible and in the work of the historic Christ and that, until the judgment at the Second Advent, God would not speak again. Fox proclaimed that God speaks directly to each human soul through a present, living experience of revelation, the Inward Light of Christ, requiring no human mediator to translate God's meaning to the individual.

George Fox was a powerful personality. In *The Beginnings of Quakerism*, William Braithwaite described him as having "combined in a singular degree the burning zeal of the enthusiast with the magnetic force of a born leader

⁴⁵ Revised Sep 2, 2016

⁴⁶ Fox, George, *Journal of George Fox*, (edited by John L. Nickalls), 1952, paperback 1975, p. 11.

of men”⁴⁷ and such was the power of the truth he preached, “that a single man or woman living in the spirit of the apostles and prophets would shake all the country...for ten miles round.”⁴⁸

He soon attracted a group of young men and women who became inspired preachers of this new religious force and were called Publishers of Truth. These were joined by other earnest men and women. They engaged in the difficult work of spreading the movement, traveling in twos and threes throughout the length and breadth of England, extending their labors also into Wales, Scotland, and Ireland, although often hindered by imprisonment and persecution. Undismayed by every sort of difficulty, they fed the inward spiritual flame of widely separated groups, stimulating their zeal, holding them in the bond of group-consciousness, and providing for them a channel of communication.

Margaret Fell, often called the Mother of Quakerism, was an early convert and an equally powerful personality. Swarthmoor Hall, her home, became a center of activity, a stable focal point giving the movement a sense of community and strength. She set up a central fund to help those on long preaching trips, in prison, in isolated meetings, and to promote the establishment of women’s meetings. Eleven years after the death of her husband, Judge Thomas Fell, she and George Fox were married.

The powerful preaching of these leaders was supported by the daily life of the first Friends. Along with an intense religious fervor there ran a life of practical righteousness. Justice, temperance, commercial honesty, and observance of all civil laws that did not violate their conscience were vitally important matters. Braithwaite wrote, “None could dispute the validity of a Christianity which resulted in consistent and Christ-touched lives. In such lives, amid all their imperfections, the Inward Light was justified of its children.”⁴⁹

A deep realization of the equality of all persons before God led to the early recognition of the spiritual gifts of women as equal to men and the acceptance of their public preaching. Among other behaviors, it brought about the use of the “plain” language and Friends’ refusal to remove their hats in the presence of their social superiors, customs which caused frequent persecution. Still greater suffering resulted from their refusal to take oaths or to pay tithes for the upkeep of the state church.

With the restoration of the monarchy in 1660, the Anglican Church was re-established as the official religion of the state and no other worship was permitted. An era of persistent persecution was inaugurated for all religious non-conformists. Friends endured long imprisonments, disastrous fines, and cruel treatment. Their meetings were often broken up and meetinghouses destroyed. But because their consciences assured them that resistance to an unjust law was no sin, they continued their way of worship openly and bravely in spite of every effort to stop them. In some places, when all adult Friends were in jail, the children held meetings alone.

This faithfulness in persisting according to their religious conviction, with no evasion of the penalties of the law, was an important factor in finally winning legal recognition for liberty of conscience and religious toleration. But for the Society of Friends itself, the persecution had some unfortunate results: it restricted the itinerant services of the Publishers of Truth, isolated meetings, and hastened the necessity for organizing what had been a glorious creative movement into a sect.

From 1667 on, George Fox was active in helping to organize the system of monthly, quarterly, and yearly meetings and in arranging methods of procedure therein. Women’s business meetings were set up in addition to men’s. A Meeting of Ministers and a Meeting for Sufferings (a yearly meeting Executive Committee) were established.

The earliest concerns of these business meetings were to provide for the poor and prisoners, to check the vagaries of individual judgment, to admonish delinquents, to provide for carrying on work at home and covering the

⁴⁷ Braithwaite, William C. *The Beginnings of Quakerism*, London, 1923, p. 50.

⁴⁸ Braithwaite, *ibid.*, p. 67.

⁴⁹ Braithwaite, *ibid.* p. 152.

expenses of ministers traveling beyond the seas, and to keep accurate records. While the discipline thus set up was no equivalent for the compelling power of widespread evangelism, it did foster well-ordered and noble lives.

Efforts at formulation of doctrine soon followed, and in this, Robert Barclay (1648-1690) and William Penn (1644-1718) were the foremost figures. Barclay's most complete exposition was his *Apology*. His Quakerism was affected by current Puritan theology. The influence of their writings was so great as to be felt as late as the nineteenth century when the various separations occurred within the Society of Friends.

A period of development into a sect was underway. Along with the formulation of doctrine there were growing experiments toward improving the social order. These included justice toward workmen and employees and refusal of election bribes. Efforts were made to reestablish the poor in business, along with plans for giving work to those in prison, the establishment of humane workhouses, and active concern for the treatment of the insane. Temperance and the question of slavery claimed the attention of Friends. In Pennsylvania and Rhode Island bold attempts were made to establish truly Christian commonwealths.

Friends in the American Colonies

As early as 1655 the New World had attracted Friends, and efforts were made during the following years to plant the seeds of Quakerism in Massachusetts, New York, and Virginia. In the latter two colonies there was some persecution, but the martyrs of Quakerism in America met their test in Massachusetts. Everything that the authorities could devise was tried to stop the publishing of Quaker Truth in this colony. Harrowing tortures were endured, many underwent punishment again and again, and four suffered death. After ten years of persecution, they succeeded in breaking down the intolerant laws.

During this period a haven was found in Rhode Island, where the first meeting in the New World had been established. This colony became the center of New England Quakerism. Its long line of Quaker Governors and men in public positions did eminent service in the political life of the colony until the time of the Revolutionary War.

A period of expansion followed George Fox's visit to America in 1671-1673. Meetings were established in New York, Maryland, Virginia, and the Carolinas, and in greater numbers in New Jersey and Pennsylvania.

These last two colonies had been opened for settlement later than the others, but conditions were especially favorable. West Jersey was bought by a group of Friends in 1674 and in 1681 Pennsylvania was granted to William Penn, so that there Quakers had freedom and peace and unparalleled opportunity to try out their ability to conduct a Christian government. William Penn was a statesman of high order, an outstanding advocate of justice for Native Americans, and a champion of liberty of conscience. He designed a government based on his advanced ideas of civil and religious liberty and equality, which was a forerunner of that laid out in the Constitution of the United States. Friends maintained almost absolute control of Pennsylvania until 1740 and were a power for fifteen years longer, when measures to support the French and Indian War led most to resign from the Assembly.

The successful policy of Friends toward Native Americans was the outcome of their sense of justice and their conviction that before God all persons are equal, irrespective of their color. These principles slowly formed their attitude on another great question—that of slavery. In 1671 George Fox had advised giving slaves their freedom after a period of years. Philadelphia Yearly Meeting advised against the slave trade in 1696, and such sentiment grew slowly until 1758 when John Woolman made a moving plea for the liberty of slaves and began the great work of his life. He aroused Friends in both America and England, many of whom became influential factors and tireless workers until slavery was finally abolished.

Friends' opposition to war largely took them out of public life, and this fact together with the increasing influence of Quietism caused a profound transformation in the Society. More and more Friends in the latter half of the 18th century withdrew from the outside world and centered upon perfecting their own spiritual lives, hedging their

Society about with the rules and customs of a peculiar people. This preserved some valuable features, but it also brought a narrowing introspection that was fertile ground for controversy.

The Second Period of Quakerism

Early in the 19th century two very divergent tendencies could be seen within Quakerism. One was toward a zealous evangelicalism which was fostered by a number of prominent Quaker ministers, some of whom came over from England, and accelerated by the popular rise of the Methodist movement. The other was toward a reaffirmation of the Inward Light of Christ as a sufficient basis for faith. Job Scott, a saintly man and true mystic, and Elias Hicks, a prophetic minister, were the chief spokesmen for the latter.

The chasm grew steadily wider until 1827 when a separation occurred in Philadelphia Yearly Meeting. This tragedy, due to lack of historical knowledge, lack of spiritual understanding and lack of love for one another, was followed by withdrawals by one side or the other in many other meetings, forming so-called "Hicksite" and so-called "Orthodox" branches. Further separations occurred over the last 200 years, resulting in the fractured Society seen today.

Yet the 19th century did contain some advances in Quaker development. A great migration of Friends into new territory in the Midwest took place and new yearly meetings in Ohio, Indiana, Iowa and Illinois were established.

The retirement of Friends from public affairs also helped to stimulate their zeal for purely moral causes, such as the abolition of slavery, the welfare of African-Americans and Native Americans, the work for social morality, the suppression of liquor traffic, and prison reform.

The women's rights movement grew out of the involvement of Quaker women in the anti-slavery movement. By lecturing extensively against slavery, they did much to break down the barrier against women speaking in public. Lucretia Mott, a Quaker minister and abolitionist, along with Mary Ann M'Clintock, Martha Coffin Wright, Jane Hunt, and Elizabeth Cady Stanton, called the Seneca Falls Convention in 1848, which marked the formal beginning of the organized crusade for the rights of women.

Education has been a deep concern of Friends from their earliest history, and monthly meeting schools, boarding schools and colleges have been established.

History of Ohio Valley Yearly Meeting

During the early 18th Century many Friends were attracted southward into Virginia and the Carolinas and some became involved in the institution of slavery. As a result of the labors of Francis Daniel Pastorius, Benjamin Lay, John Woolman, Anthony Benezet, and others, Friends came to believe slavery a curse; and slowly the conscience of the Society of Friends was awakened to the evil. Many Friends in the South decided to migrate to the slave-free lands in the Northwest Territory to begin a new life.

The migration to the Waynesville, Ohio area began in 1799 when Abijah O'Neal and his family left Bush River, South Carolina, and settled on some 3,000 acres on the east bank of the Little Miami River north of Caesar's Creek. Within 15 years, more than 18,000 followers of Fox and Penn left the land of slavery and made for the North to find a new home. Others came to the Miami country from Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and other seaboard states.

In April, 1801, twelve families (81 individuals) in the Waynesville area began meeting for worship in a member's home. Near the end of that year they sent a request to Westland Meeting, Pennsylvania (Baltimore Yearly Meeting) to establish a regular meeting for worship on First and Fifth Days. This request was granted in Ninth Month, 1802. Early in 1803 they asked Redstone Quarterly Meeting for permission to establish a monthly meeting; and when the request was approved, Miami Monthly Meeting was opened on Tenth Month 13, 1803. The eastern boundary was the Hocking River, the southern was the Ohio River, but there was no limit to the north or to the west. During this period of migration, hundreds of Friends from the Carolinas and Georgia brought their

membership to Miami Monthly Meeting, until such time as other meetings could be established in the Northwest Territory. By 1815, Miami Monthly Meeting was said to have the largest membership of any Friends Meeting in Quakerdom.

After its establishment in 1803, Miami Monthly Meeting set off many new Meetings. Among the earliest ones were Lees Creek, Hardin Creek, Caesar's Creek, West Branch, Elk, Center and Whitewater. In 1807 Miami, West Branch and Center Monthly Meetings requested that a new quarterly meeting be established to be known as Miami Quarterly Meeting, to be held at Waynesville, Ohio, on the second Seventh Day in the Second, Fifth, Eighth and Eleventh Months. Baltimore Yearly Meeting having approved the request, Miami Quarterly Meeting was opened in Fifth month 1809. The building of the White Brick Meetinghouse at Waynesville was begun in 1811 to accommodate the Quarterly Meeting.

In 1812, Baltimore Yearly Meeting granted permission to the quarterly meetings west of the Alleghenies to form Ohio Yearly Meeting. The first session was held at Short Creek on the 14th of Eighth month, 1813. The Ohio Yearly Meeting included all meetings in Ohio, Indiana Territory and adjacent areas of Pennsylvania and Virginia.

In 1820, Miami Quarterly Meeting proposed that all Meetings in Illinois, Indiana and western Ohio form Indiana Yearly Meeting. The quarterly meetings making up the proposed Yearly Meeting were Miami, West Branch, Fairfield, Whitewater and Blue River Quarterlies. Ohio Yearly Meeting approved the proposal, and the first session was held at Whitewater (Richmond, Indiana), Eighth month 10, 1821.

When separation occurred in 1828, the Yearly Meeting split into two bodies: Indiana Yearly Meeting (Orthodox), and Indiana Yearly Meeting (Hicksite). At Waynesville, the Hicksite body retained the Meetinghouse. However, in most other cases west of the Alleghenies, the Orthodox body retained it.

For nearly 150 years, there were two bodies known as Indiana Yearly Meeting. In 1975, it seemed desirable for Indiana Yearly Meeting of Friends General Conference to change its name to eliminate the unavoidable confusion which resulted from identical names and to better identify the area included in its membership. For these reasons, in 1976, the name was changed to Ohio Valley Yearly Meeting.

The Yearly Meeting is composed of two Quarters: Miami and Whitewater.

In 2015, Whitewater Quarter consists of Bloomington (Indiana), Clear Creek (Richmond, Indiana), Fall Creek (Pendleton, Indiana), Fort Wayne (Indiana), Hopewell (Dublin, Indiana), Lafayette (Indiana), North Meadow Circle (Indianapolis, Indiana), and White Rose (Wabash, Indiana) Monthly Meetings.

Miami Quarter consists of Campus (Wilmington, Ohio), Community (Cincinnati, Ohio), Dayton (Ohio), Eastern Hills (Cincinnati, Ohio), Englewood (Clayton, Ohio), Green Plain (South Charleston, Ohio), Lexington (Kentucky), Louisville (Kentucky), Miami (Ohio), Oxford (Ohio), and Yellow Springs (Ohio) Monthly Meetings.

QUERIES⁵⁰

The queries invite Friends, both individually and as a meeting, to examine themselves periodically relative to the grounding principles that Friends have established. Faithful consideration of the queries in openness to the Spirit has been found to enrich the life of the meeting and its members.

Friends have found different ways to make use of the queries. Some read them as a starting point for personal inward reflection. Meetings may consider a query in a period of meditation and worship at the beginning of their business meetings. It is good practice to consider each query at least once a year. A meeting's responses to the

⁵⁰ Approved in OVYM sessions, June 17, 2017

queries may provide a basis for writing its annual state of the meeting report. The presentation of the queries to the local meeting is the responsibility of the clerk unless assigned to a committee, such as Ministry and Counsel.

First Query

What is Quakerism or the Quaker way? What does that mean to me? What marks our meeting as Quaker?

Second Query

What does worship mean to me, and how do I worship? How does our meeting worship as a community?

Third Query

What helps me seek Divine guidance in business meeting? How does our meeting seek and follow the group's spiritual discernment in our meetings for business?

Fourth Query

What spiritual disciplines enliven my spirit? How does our meeting facilitate spiritual growth?

Fifth Query

What binds me to my meeting community? What fosters mutual love and communion in our meeting? How does our meeting resolve conflicts when they arise?

Sixth Query

How do I seek to act with integrity? How do I follow the ever-opening pathway of Truth? How does my meeting help me to be faithful?

Seventh Query

How does simplicity guide my days? How does our meeting practice simplicity?

Eighth Query

How is my life a daily example of nonviolence? How does our meeting nurture peace in the wider community?

Ninth Query

How do I live in harmony with all creation? How does our meeting community exercise responsible stewardship?

Tenth Query

How do I affirm that of God in everyone? In what ways is our meeting an open and affirming community, welcoming to all? In what ways do we need to grow?

Eleventh Query

How have I fallen short in the past year? When has our meeting avoided doing things that are hard to do?

Twelfth Query

Where have I experienced the Divine Mystery in my life? How do we keep the Divine Spirit at the center of the life of our meeting?

DISCIPLINE REVISION

Proposals for change of discipline may originate in the Monthly Meeting, and if so, they should receive the approval of the Quarterly Meeting, and then be transmitted to the Yearly Meeting for final action; or they may originate in the Yearly Meeting itself. In this case, final action may not be taken until the following year after the proposed change has appeared in the minutes of the Yearly Meeting or has been presented in a printed form for approval.

GLOSSARY

This is a list of terms sometimes used in Quaker practice. Some appear in this Discipline; all in Quaker speech and writings.

Advices High Claims which the Society of Friends makes on its adherents. Friends have always found it useful regularly to remind one another of their nature. These advices touch on the foundations of true, personal discipline, on the care of our children, on family life and on the character of our day-to-day living.

Affirmation A legal declaration made by Friends or others who conscientiously decline to take an oath.

Associate Member A minor child recorded as a member at the request of parents, one or both of whom are members of the Monthly Meeting. Associate Members may be transferred to full membership status at their own request, preferably in writing, after they have reached an age of decision on religious associations and are familiar with Friends principles.

Attached A member of a meeting.

Birthright Member Friend born of Quaker parents and recorded at birth on the membership rolls of the meeting.

Breaking Meeting Term used to designate the close of the Meeting for Worship when those who sit at the head of the Meeting shake hands with the persons next to them.

Budget The annual statement giving the Meeting's financial needs for this period of time.

Clearness, Committee for In proposed marriages, a committee of Friends is appointed to determine the "clearness" of the persons intending marriage, such as freedom from conflicting obligations. It also refers to a committee to assist a person or the meeting to clarify thinking about a decision or concern

Clerks The presiding clerk is the person who conducts the business and who formulates the "sense" of the meeting. A business meeting may also have recording and reading clerks.

Concern A concern, whether of an individual or a Meeting, implies an interest so deep and vigorous that it often moves to action.

Continuing Revelation The belief that God still speaks to people directly.

Convinced Friend A member who has become a Friend as a result of being led to his or her decision by an Inner Teacher after careful study, thought and inward seeking.

Eldering The act of encouraging and/or questioning an individual's behavior and expression of concerns, to be done with courtesy and love.

Elders Elders originally were appointed for life. Their purpose was to foster the spiritual life of the Meeting and of the individuals in the Meeting.

Exercise Until recently used to describe a deep concern which a person felt under compulsion of the Spirit to bring to a Meeting for Worship or Business.

Facing Benches or *Facing Seats* The benches on the front of the Meeting room, facing the body of the Meeting, on which Friends ministers, elders and other leaders generally sit.

Gallery The benches in the front of the Meeting House, facing the body of the Meeting and immediately back of the facing benches.

Gathered Meeting The phrase used to describe those special occasions when the Friends Meeting attains a more than usual sense of divine Presence, which touches the hearts of all worshippers and unites them in a common experience of holy fellowship.

Head of Meeting Traditionally the eldest members who sits on the facing bench. When Meeting for Worship is concluded, he or she shakes hands with a neighbor; others then shake hands; thus Meeting is broken.

Inner Light This refers to the presence of God in our hearts and lives, a reality which guides and directs us, which gives us strength to act on this guidance, and thus bring us into unity with the Spirit of God. Also called the "Inward Light," the "Christ Within" or the "Holy Spirit."

Leading See To Proceed as Way Opens.

Liberates Them To set concerned and qualified persons free for religious services—as traveling among Friends.

Meeting for Sufferings A committee to support and care for members and their families who suffer because of their commitment to Friends' principles (more in use in the early days of Quakerism). In England in recent years it refers to a representative committee which acts in a deliberative and executive manner for the Society of Friends when the Yearly Meeting is not in session.

Meeting Sets or *Is Gathered* Friends come together or gather in quietness to listen for God's word.

Minding the Light This expression is used to remind us that there is an "Inward Light" in each one which can reveal God's will and direction. Friends sometimes remind one another to "Mind the Light."

Ministers Those recognized and "recorded" by a Meeting as having a special gift for the ministry, both vocal and service.

Minute of Travel The statement of endorsement a Meeting gives to a member who has a concern to visit other meetings and Friends groups. It establishes the good standing of the Friend and shows the affectionate interest of the Meeting in the various meetings being visited by the member.

One Is Moved to Speak In the quietness of the Meeting one feels the need or the urge to speak.

Opening See To Proceed as Way Opens.

Out or Unity Not in harmony with Friends' principles and testimonies. An historical example: marrying one who is not a Friend, thus out of unity.

Overseers Members of the committee that has particular care of the membership. They may also suggest answers to the Queries to be sent from the Monthly Meeting to the Quarterly Meeting.

Plain Language Refers to the use of "thee, thy, thou, and thine" by Friends. The plain language bears witness to the testimony of early Friends for democracy and equality. Three hundred years ago class distinctions were expressed by the use of the plural pronoun "you" when addressing anyone considered as one's superior, and the singular pronoun "thee" when addressing anyone considered equal or inferior. The followers of George Fox refused to recognize such distinctions. They insisted on using "thee" to any individual and "you" only in its proper plural sense. This brought on them much persecution, which the use of "you" might have spared them. It was their concern that their language should place all people on the same level. It is ungrammatical to use "thee is" but it became established usage. The members of Friends Meetings and others were and are spoken to by given names and with no titles.

Preparative Meeting A meeting formed through the development of a worship group under the care of a Monthly Meeting.

Programmed Meeting A Meeting for Worship, usually conducted by a pastor, with pre-arranged program including music, an offering, sermon, etc. In some programmed meetings periods of silence and meditation are provided and Friends feel free to speak from the body of the Meeting.

Quakers The unofficial name of the Religious Society of Friends. It was the name given them because of the "quaking" or shaking motion in the early days of their founding.

Queries The questions which are used in conjunction with the "advices" and which give opportunity to ponder well their implications, and to examine our own conduct in the light of them. Their "practical" character is indeed striking as they ask about such matters as love and forgiveness in our daily actions and lives.

Recording of Ministers A member who is recognized as having the gift of Ministry or a special gift of service to the Meeting or community may be recorded as a minister of a Friends Meeting.

Sense of the Meeting In reaching decisions on items of business, Friends do not vote. After full consideration of a matter and allowing for the development of new insights, the collective judgment of the Meeting is gathered and expressed by the clerk for the approval of the Meeting. If there is marked divergence of judgment and no decision is reached, the matter is postponed until a later date.

Sojourning Member A Friend who is temporarily residing in the area of another Monthly Meeting may become a Sojourning Member. However, the member's primary financial responsibility and membership remains with his or her home meeting.

Stock The financial budgets of the Meetings—Monthly, Quarterly and Yearly.

Stop in the Mind This expression is used by Friends to explain why they cannot follow a course of action of thought. It is thought to spring from the "Light." Friends say that they do or do not "feel easy" unless the way opens.

Testimonies Convictions based on beliefs of the Society of Friends which give direction to our lives. Some of these testimonies are seeking for Divine Guidance, simplicity, integrity, peace as opposed to war, temperance in all things, affirmation instead of "swearing" in court, the worth of each individual regardless of race, sex or religion.

That of God in Everyone An expression used by George Fox: “Answering to that of God in everyone.” (See also *The Inner Light*).

To Center Down An endeavor to direct our conscious thought and open our minds, in order that we may hear God speak directly to us.

To Proceed as Way Opens This means to wait for guidance, to avoid hasty judgment or action, to wait for future circumstances to help solve a problem. The spiritual guidance which may come in a time of seeking or entirely unexpectedly, bringing suggestion for previously unforeseen action.

To Speak to One’s Condition This refers to the experience of receiving a message directly from God or from another person, which helps one solve a problem or make a right decision. The phrase originated with George Fox, who felt “there is one, even Christ Jesus, that can speak to thy condition.”

Unprogrammed Meeting This is a Meeting for Worship and is sometimes referred to as a “silent meeting.” No pastor is in charge. The gathered Friends sit in silence, waiting upon God and “leadings of the Spirit.” Some Friends may be given vocal messages to share with the Meeting. Meetings for Worship may be entirely silent and are often of great inspiration to those worshipping together.

Weighty Member Influential member and leader of a Meeting.

Witness One who gives evidence of religious beliefs and convictions.

MODIFIED MARRIAGE CERTIFICATE

Changes may take place in wedding forms and procedures. With the approval of the Committee of Oversight, the marriage certificate may be modified and the wedding may be planned to suit the needs of the couple.

A Modified Form of Marriage Certificate

Friends:

R.B. of..., son of F.W.B. and V.H.B. of ..., and C.O. of..., daughter of C.W.S. and R.G.S. of ..., declared their intention to marry each other, to the ... Monthly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends. Their proposed marriage was approved by that Meeting.

On the ... day of the ... month of the year ..., during the (a) appointed, (b) regular Meeting for Worship, R.B. declared that he took C.O. to be his wife, promising with Divine assistance to be a loving and faithful husband as long as they both shall live. Similarly, D.O. declared that she took R.B. to be her husband, promising with Divine assistance to be a loving and faithful wife as long as they both shall live. She by her choice (a) took the surname of her husband. (b) retained her own name.

R. and C. in an outward and visible confirmation of the marriage then signed this certificate.

We who have signed this certificate have witnessed this marriage while worshipping together.

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