

LEYM Monthly Meeting Clerks Consultation

November 20-22, 2009

Weber Center, Adrian, Michigan

Quaker Practices in Meeting for Worship for Business

Some of the things that are different between Friends' practice and consensus or voting

Use of silence

Hold Recording Clerk in the Light

Open and close meeting in worship

Invite Friends back into worship as needed

Ensure that all points of view and information is/are shared

Come ready to hear and be led

Test the sense of the meeting

What is meant by "spiritual"?

As in "deepening the spiritual life of the meeting?"

- Sense of connection with the Living Presence
- Centered

Deepening the center place

Rootedness in the Spirit

Questions we had about deepening the spiritual life of the meeting

Encouraging "settledness" in the Meeting for Worship

Helping the Meeting find ways to communicate what Friends have found in the Meeting for Worship

Encouraging vocal ministry that is rooted in the Spirit

Practical ideas we had about deepening the spiritual life of the meeting

Discussion groups prior to worship that are focused on areas of Quaker faith and practice to help ground the worship

First Day School enters the Meeting for Worship at the end of worship, to experience a gathered meeting

Twilight worship at the rise of meeting (worship sharing format regarding Friends' experiences in Meeting for Worship) to help Friends share with each other what they have found in the Meeting for Worship

Identified Friends hold the clerks and the meeting in the Light

Recorded minutes are read and approved minute by minute. (In some meetings, this is only done for more complex minutes.)

Hold the Recording Clerk in the Light as s/he records.

Desirable qualities of clerking

- Open to Spirit
- Flexible
- Humble

Conflicts that have been successfully resolved in our meetings

Whether to build a meetinghouse

Whether to build an addition on the meetinghouse

Whether to marry a couple under the care of the meeting

When and where to have monthly gatherings

How to handle a difficult personality

Whether to adopt a specific political statement

Whether to adopt a minute on same gender marriage

Elements of successful resolutions in our meetings

- Years of listening, through threshing sessions
- Friends' personal willingness to step aside
- Respect for individuals who stand firm
- Focus on a loving or godly outcome
- Willingness to wait
- Concern for each other
- Information and/or services from FGC
- Education on the topic
- Committee groundwork or seasoning
- Clearness committees with Friends involved in the conflict
- Ministry and Nurture committee takes up the concern
- An individual Friend pays attention to a disruptive Friend
- Help interpret
- A Friend depersonalizes differences, i.e., restates or recasts in less polarizing language
- An attitude of "way will open".
- When a matter cannot be approved on the meeting level, approve on the committee level
- Clerk ensures that the process is perceived as fair
- All Friends feel heard.
- Hold an issue, or a Friend, in the Light in order to experience an inward shift in ourselves.

Our goals when a Friend is “out of order” in a Meeting for Worship for Business

Good order (We recognized that use of the word, “good,” is problematic for some of us.)

Loving outcome

Steps to handling “out of order” behavior in the Meeting for Worship for Business

- In the meeting, first call for worship/silence.
- Take steps outside of the Meeting for Worship for Business, e.g., have a listening session.
 - Open with worship
 - Invite Friend to share about what is troubling him/her.
 - Show understanding by reflecting, asking questions for clarification, etc.
 - “Is there anything else you want to share about this?”
 - Accept the Friend’s perception as valid for him/her.
 - Explain/educate regarding Friends’ processes and the reason for them.
 - Ask for a commitment to Friends’ process
 - End in worship
 - Other possible avenues to explore with the Friend:
 - ♣ “How could the meeting hear you better?”
 - ♣ Ask another Friend to take this Friend’s concern to the meeting.

When a listening session isn’t enough

- In one meeting, several Friends spontaneously spoke to the issue in the next meeting
- An individual pays attention to the disruptive person
- Outside resources are used, e.g., Traveling Ministries Program of FGC, outside clearness committee
- Call upon other monthly meeting clerks for support, ideas
- Involve the Ministry and Nurture Committee

Specific problem with Friend who violates boundaries

- Refer to Ministry and Nurture Committee
- Call in an outside facilitator for a listening session
- Hold the person constantly in the Light, ask for divine guidance
- Confront the Friend regarding how his/her behavior is affecting the life of the meeting and ask if s/he is willing to engage in problem solving.
- Friends arrange to intervene on the spot
- Conduct a meeting retreat regarding personal boundaries
- Institute a "buddy system".

What we mean by "community"

- Shared experience
 - worship
 - social action
 - community endeavors
 - study
 - meals
 - example: building a meeting house
- Caring about each other in our whole lives
- Trust and acceptance of each other – comfortable – no shields
- Openness and honesty
- Feeling safe to be who we are
- Shared purpose
- Sense of integrity is respected
- Community is built by sharing our stories with each other
 - Spiritual journeys
 - Life stories
- Appreciation of each other
- Group identity which is recognized in the wider community
- Commitment to each others' growth
- Recognition that we are drawn together for a spiritual purpose

Ways individual Friends and meetings build community

- o Faithful attendance – just show up
- o Model nonjudgment
- o Celebrations
 - o Meeting for Naming for new babies
 - o High school graduation
 - o Book for each child at the end of the school year
 - o Regular potlucks
- o Groups to study books together or watch and discuss DVD (e.g., *Thirst*)
- o Establishing a yearly theme for the monthly meeting and plan an annual retreat based on the theme (bringing in outside facilitator and/or using in meeting facilitators)
- o Inviting Friends to each others' homes to share personal interests
- o Joys and sorrows at end of the Meeting for Worship
- o Support other members of Meeting by attending their speaking events, concerts, etc.
- o First Sunday in August, GPQM hosts a gathering at Quaker Park
- o Spiritual formation groups
- o Gathering regionally (Five Friends Meetings; Green Pastures Quarterly Meeting)
- o Committee work
- o Family camp
- o Alternative Christmas (in which cards are provided that indicate "We gave to x charitable organization in your name.")
- o First Day School – teaching and volunteering in order to build relationships with the young Friends
- o Newsletters
- o Friendly Eight Groups
- o Phone Tree
- o Listserv/ e-mail groups
- o Day after Thanksgiving celebration: "Bring your leftovers and leftover guests."
- o New Year's Eve potluck with worship 15 minutes before and 15 minutes after midnight
- o Monthly game night, or monthly movie night
- o Meeting retreat or forum on the LEYM Query and/or the State of the Meeting

Ways to develop as clerks, to develop new clerks

- Mentor each other; observe each other
- Encourage involvement of all Friends in the meeting in the wider Quaker world
- Send new clerks to clerking workshops at FGC Gathering or Pendle Hill
- Invite Friends from other meetings to your meeting's activities
- Use the Traveling Ministries Program to do a regional clerks' workshop or retreat
- Structure meeting discussions regarding roles in the meeting prior to the nominating committee process
- Monthly meeting clerks arrange to gather at the regional level: Five Friends Meetings; Green Pastures Quarter

The following were added as a result of Sunday's discussion.

Make use of the support already available in the meeting for the role of clerk, e.g., through the Ministry and Nurture Committee.

Consider asking for an anchoring or support committee, perhaps with Friends outside the meeting in the case of small meetings.

Consider ways to institutionalize support for the clerk in the meeting's structure.

Ways LEYM can continue to be useful to monthly meeting clerks

Reserve a room at LEYM Annual Sessions for MM clerks to meet: Late Friday afternoon? Thursday night?

LEYM provide a resource packet to new clerks: reading list, contact information for other clerks, mentoring list

Provide a periodic consultation for clerks, perhaps every four years, alternating with a consultation for another group (e.g., nominating committee clerks, treasurers and finance committee clerks, recording clerks, etc.)

Set up a webpage on the LEYM website for Monthly Meeting Clerks, with a link from the homepage

Set up a listserv for Monthly Meeting Clerks and monitor its usefulness to MM Clerks