

Faith and Practice Committee Report to Illinois Yearly Meeting 2012

The Faith and Practice Committee has met six times since our last yearly meeting, and conducted workshops with Fifty-seventh Street, Oshkosh, and Lake Forest Meetings. Our work has been difficult this year as the committee is significantly reduced in size and two of our members have faced very serious personal or family health issues. However, we have continued to compose new text and make revisions to existing text, and would now like to present several sections to the yearly meeting.

The section on marriage was approved for a 5-year provisional period in 2007, which expires this year. We have revised the text, and attached it to this report, indicating insertions and deletions with underscores and strikeouts, respectively. We now submit it to the meeting with a request that it be approved for an indefinite period.

The section on quarterly meetings and the sample membership form were both presented to the yearly meeting last year for comments. We have revised both these texts in response to suggestions received and attached the revised versions to this report. We now submit them to the meeting with a request that they be approved for a 5-year provisional period, to expire at the 2017 sessions of Illinois Yearly Meeting.

This year, we began work on a section on meeting for worship. An initial draft is now complete and attached to this report. We ask Friends to read it carefully and convey any suggestions to the committee. Our plan is to revise it over the coming year and submit a new version to the yearly meeting in 2013 with a request for 5-year provisional approval.

1 Marriage

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

8 Rules of Discipline and Advices of Illinois Yearly Meeting, editions of 1878 and
9 1892

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

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

18 The love of one another to which God calls us is neither a feeling nor a static relationship
19 that one either has or doesn't have; like life, like self, it is always a journey, a work in progress.
20 Marriage involves a mutual commitment to share your lives, following together a path of love
21 requiring growth, integrity, and mutual respect. The religious dimension of marriage is found
22 not only in the understanding that God sanctions the union and strengthens it when we humbly
23 seek together unity in God, but also in the recognition that marriage is a special opportunity for
24 the practice of that love to which we are more generally called.

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

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

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

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

101 The meeting needs to be aware that they may work with couples where one of the individuals
102 may not be a member of the meeting or even a Friend. Sometimes the wedding is to occur far from the
103 home meeting or it may include multiple monthly meetings. Care should be taken in coordinating the
104 various responsibilities among those involved. Situations like this may make the process take longer and
105 require that the meeting prayerfully discern how to assist the couple.

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

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

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

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

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

129 **Possible queries for the clearness for marriage process:**

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

137 The questions below are meant to serve as examples only — the couple and the committee
138 discern what questions to consider in their sessions together. ~~No specific answers are to be expected and~~
139 ~~the couple may decline to answer any question.~~ Queries not discussed with the committee may be
140 provided to the couple for their consideration.

141 *Marriage Queries*

142 Have you sought divine guidance in your decision to marry?

143 How will you make marriage a sacred and lifelong relationship?

144 Have you discussed with each other your religious beliefs and the role they will have in your life
145 together? How do you expect your faith to inform your decision-making as a couple? Have you discussed
146 the religious upbringing of any children you may have?

147 How do you nurture your relationship? How will you uphold and strengthen the relationship with the
148 passage of time?

149 How do you communicate with each other? What are sources of potential conflicts between you? When
150 conflicts arise, how do you handle them?

151 Have you discussed how you will make decisions as a couple?

152 Have you discussed what each of you will bring to the relationship, including practical issues in the
153 maintenance of a household?

154 Have you discussed your expectations of sexuality in marriage?

155 Have you discussed whether you want to have children? How large a family do you envision? How soon
156 do you anticipate having children? What are your expectations about how you will raise, discipline, and
157 educate your children?

158 Have you discussed whether either or both of you will change your names and have you discussed what
159 last name any children will have?

160 If either of you has children have you considered the impact of this marriage on them?

- 161 Have you discussed how ~~will~~ you will balance the needs of your marriage with your friendships and
162 responsibilities outside the home (for example, work, volunteer activities, education)?
- 163 Have you discussed how your finances will be managed? Do you have similar expectations about income,
164 saving, spending and borrowing?
- 165 If there may be situations in which this marriage will not be legally recognized ~~by the state~~, have you
166 discussed how to protect each other's legal rights?
- 167 How will you support each other through times of trial, unexpected life changes, or unfulfilled hopes and
168 dreams? Are you willing to listen together for spiritual guidance when you face a problem without a clear
169 answer and/or ask for a clearness committee?
- 170 Are you willing to postpone personal fulfillment if your spouse is not ready for what that might entail?
- 171 What do you expect your relationship with the meeting to be in your life as a couple?
- 172 How could the meeting support your marriage in the years to come?
- 173 Do either of you have emotional or other commitments to a third person which would interfere with this
174 marriage?
- 175 Have you examined own patterns of behavior in previous relationships, and considered how they might
176 need to change as you enter this marriage?
- 177 Has any legal divorce been finalized?
- 178 What are the views of your families regarding the marriage?
- 179 Have you discussed how ~~do~~ you intend to keep close relations with family who may live far away
180 (especially in cases of illness or old age)?
- 181 Do you have an understanding of the cultural, religious, and language background of your partner?
- 182 Have you discussed any issues from your lives to this point that might affect your marriage?
- 183 Have you discussed practices to sustain your marriage?

184 **Possible wording for vows and certificate:**

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

189 In keeping with Friends' testimony of equality both parties in a marriage make the same
190 promises. The vows are not elaborate. They should state clearly that the two individuals are marrying
191 each other, and promise to be loving and faithful to each other as long as they both shall live. The vows
192 acknowledge ~~the role of God~~ the religious or spiritual dimension of the marriage and the importance of
193 the gathered community.

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

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

199 *Or:*

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

203 *Suggestions for the certificate:*

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

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

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

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

225 (Man's name) _____.

226 (Woman's name) _____.

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

229 *Or:*

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

236 ____ and ____ signed here witnessing their promises to each other:

237 and we, being present, signed as witnesses:

238 **Care of Marriages**

239 Strong marriage relationships contribute to the strength and spiritual growth of the meeting
240 community. At the same time, "marriage is recognized to be not an easy bond, but a high calling."
241 Friends are aware that care for a marriage, therefore, goes beyond the clearness process and the wedding
242 to include an ongoing relationship with the couple. Indeed, the meeting is enriched by all marriages in
243 the community and benefits by providing care and attention to each marriage whether or not the wedding
244 was conducted under the care of the meeting.

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

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

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

256 Meetings need to be aware that there are a variety of life changes that may create stress in
257 marriages. Eventually most couples will encounter serious illness or disability of one of the couple, a

258 child, or parents; employment transitions; changing financial circumstances; aging; and death in the
259 family. Couples may also face stresses from religious differences, changing perception of gender identity
260 or sexual orientation, change of calling, or service commitments, among others.

261 Care of a marriage may be in the form of regular interaction with the couple by designated
262 members of the meeting (a marriage care committee). This committee may be the regular care and
263 counsel or pastoral care committee of the meeting, the couple's marriage clearness or arrangements
264 committee, a specially designated committee, or a group of couples providing mutual support. A
265 marriage care committee could meet regularly with the couple, taking care to be supportive, not intrusive.
266 They could celebrate the growth of the marriage relationship with the couple and nurture the couple's
267 spiritual life. These celebrations would be an acknowledgement of the many small events that contribute
268 to a strong relationship. The connection between the marriage care committee and the couple would
269 provide an opportunity within the meeting community for the couple to obtain pastoral assistance about
270 any problem before it became overwhelming.

271 Another aspect of this relationship is that it would provide contacts within the meeting
272 community who are knowledgeable about life changes that affect a marriage. Members of a care
273 committee could assist the couple during the various stages of a marriage. Some on the committee may be
274 parents and will be able to share with them about the effects of children on a marriage. If none on the care
275 committee has experience with a particular life change, the committee may be able to assist the couple in
276 connecting with meeting members who are knowledgeable or appropriate counselors.

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

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

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

293 **Separation and Divorce**

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

297 Bob Blood, 1972

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

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

307 It is important that the meeting be open to both sides when there is conflict in a relationship and
308 ensure that both partners feel welcome at meeting for worship. Members of the meeting and especially
309 Care and counsel or the marriage care committee should make every effort to keep lines of
310 communication open between the parties and to avoid blaming the individuals. The meeting's role is to
311 support the couple as they grow in God's love, but not to determine whether the marriage will be
312 terminated.

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

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

326 *Queries on divorce* (adapted from New England Yearly Meeting's pamphlet "Living with Oneself and
327 Others")

328 *For the Meeting:*

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

330 Does the care and counsel committee actively and sensitively reach out to persons or couples who may be
331 troubled?

332 If a couple so desires, can the care and counsel committee provide a list of professional counselors who
333 understand Friends' views?

334 Does the care and counsel committee know divorce mediators or lawyers who will seek to avoid
335 adversarial positions and assist the couple in finding the least detrimental and most economical means to
336 legally end a marriage, if that is their decision?

337 Can the meeting as a community, reach out in love to all persons involved, accepting the couple's
338 decision without being judgmental, helping them to grow past their animosities, and providing practical
339 assistance (such as locating new housing, childcare arrangements, etc)?

340 If the meeting finds itself too emotionally involved to help, will it consider calling on another monthly
341 meeting, quarterly, or yearly meeting for resource persons?

342 *For the couple:*

343 Do you seek to keep God's love as a vital force in your life to help you deal with the changes that come
344 with divorce?

345 Do you avoid hurting your former spouse in your relationships with others, either in or out of the
346 meeting?

347 *For couples with children:*

348 As individuals, are you committed to the reality that you are both still parents of your children and must
349 continue to find creative ways of living this responsibility?

350 Are you mindful of your children's pain and suffering? Can you avoid both shutting your children out of
351 your own pain and leaning on them too much?

352 Are you mindful of the needs of your children for a continuing loving relationship with each parent?

353 Are you mindful of the special love between children and grandparents or extended family and do you
354 endeavor to further strengthen these ties?

355 *For relatives:*

356 If you have a warm relationship with an in-law can you preserve it with patience and creativity during and
357 after the separation without exerting undue pressure on anyone involved?

358 Do you give loving support and encouragement, and avoid giving unwelcome advice?

359 Are you mindful of the needs of each member of the couple?

360

361 Sources for quotes:

362 p. 1, “Marriage being an ordinance affecting all the relations of life...” *Rules of Discipline and Advices of*
363 *Illinois Yearly Meeting of Friends* (1878) p. 53; (1892) p. 53.

364 p. 3, “Illinois Yearly Meeting is aware that there is great diversity...”: Illinois Yearly Meeting (1974)
365 *The Minutes and Accompanying Documents*, Saturday Morning minute #9, p. 3.

366 p. 7, Traditional wording of marriage vows: from *Book of Discipline of the Religious Society of Friends*,
367 *adopted by Illinois Yearly Meeting*, 1927, p.102

368 p. 7, Non-traditional wording for vows: modified from Southeast Yearly Meeting, *Faith and Practice*
369 (2005), p. 6.

370 p. 7, Traditional wording for certificate: from *Rules of Discipline and Advices of Illinois Yearly Meeting*
371 (1878), pp. 57-58

372 p. 8, “Marriage is recognized to be not an easy bond...”: Comfort, William Wistar (1941) *Just Among*
373 *Friends: The Quaker Way of Life*, New York: The Macmillan Co., p. 49.

374 p. 10, “Clearness committees for divorce could serve the same purposes...”: Blood, Bob, (1972) ‘Divorce
375 in Friends Meeting’, *Friends Journal*, November 1, 1972, pp. 574–575.

376 p. 10, Queries on separation and divorce: adapted from New England Yearly Meeting Care and counsel
377 Committee (2001) *Living with Oneself and Others*, 4th ed., ch. 8 (unpaginated).

1 Quarterly Meetings

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

9 *1927 Uniform Discipline of Friends General Conference*, p. 111

10 A *quarterly meeting* is a regional body of Friends, comprising more than one monthly meeting
11 and forming part of a larger yearly meeting. By tradition, quarterly meetings hold their business sessions
12 four times each year, but it has been found useful in some cases to maintain a less frequent schedule,

13 particularly if the quarterly meeting covers a wide geographic area or includes few meetings of sufficient
14 size regularly to host its sessions.

15 Quarterly meetings serve several purposes. First, it is in the quarterly meeting that monthly
16 meetings report in detail the recent condition of their meeting communities, with an opportunity for the
17 gathered Friends to respond, offer advice or assistance if needed, and take inspiration or new ideas when
18 presented. At least once each year, representatives of each monthly meeting in the quarterly read aloud
19 their monthly meeting's State of Society report in the quarterly meeting's business session. Time should
20 be left after each meeting's report for Friends to speak as they feel led in response. For information on
21 the composition of these reports, see 'State of Society reports', pp. xx-xx.

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

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

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

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

45 Finally, quarterly meetings have specific responsibilities in the setting up and laying down of
46 meetings. In particular, a quarterly meeting may set up or lay down a preparative meeting on the advice of
47 the monthly meeting of which the preparative meeting is to be a part; see 'Preparative Meetings', pp. xx-
48 xx. In addition, proposals to set up or lay down a monthly meeting are normally approved by the quarterly
49 meeting (if any) of which the monthly meeting is a part, before forwarding to the yearly meeting for final
50 approval; see 'Setting up, laying down, and reaffiliation of monthly meetings', pp. xx-xx. A quarterly
51 meeting may add an existing monthly meeting which is part of Illinois Yearly Meeting at the request of
52 the monthly meeting.

53 Each quarterly meeting appoints a clerk, who also serves as representative to the Continuing
54 Committee of Illinois Yearly Meeting. Quarterly meetings may appoint a treasurer, recording clerk, and
55 such other committees and offices as seem useful. Quarterly meetings must keep accurate records of their
56 business and finances, and archive them properly; see 'Archivist', pp. xx–xx.

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

62 *Setting up and laying down quarterly meetings*

63 To set up a new quarterly meeting, approval must first be secured from each of the monthly
64 meetings which are to become a part of it. Any monthly meetings which already form part of a quarterly
65 meeting should present the plan for establishing the new quarterly meeting to the existing quarterly
66 meeting and seek its views on the matter. Monthly meetings are advised against belonging to more than
67 one quarterly meeting simultaneously so joining a new quarterly meeting will normally mean leaving the
68 old one. After the approval of all monthly meetings has been obtained and the issue considered in any
69 existing quarterly meetings, the proposal is forwarded either to Illinois Yearly Meeting, or to the
70 Continuing Committee. Whichever group receives the request appoints a clearness committee, or may
71 request the Ministry and Advancement Committee to appoint a clearness committee. The clearness
72 committee visits with the local meetings which are to be part of the proposed quarterly meeting to explore
73 their readiness for this step. The following queries may be helpful in this process:

- 74 • What do you see as the spiritual and practical benefits of establishing a new quarterly meeting?
- 75 • What kinds of support can you provide as a quarterly meeting to the yearly meeting and to your
76 monthly meetings? What kinds of support do you expect to receive from the yearly and monthly
77 meetings?
- 78 • How strong is the commitment of each of the monthly meetings involved?
- 79 • Will you have a treasury? How will funds be raised? What will they be used for? How will the
80 treasury be administered?
- 81 • How often will you meet and where? Have you considered potential scheduling conflicts?
- 82 • How will your gatherings be planned?
- 83 • Will your sessions include worship, business, workshops, retreats, fellowship, and community
84 building? How will you decide on the relative balance?
- 85 • Do you have any qualms, fears, or reservations about establishing a quarterly meeting?

86 The committee may also meet with Friends outside the proposed quarterly meeting, to gauge the
87 impact the establishment of the new meeting might have on existing quarterly meetings, and on the yearly
88 meeting as a whole. The committee reports to Illinois Yearly Meeting; the new quarterly meeting is
89 established when the yearly meeting minutes its approval in its annual business sessions. After minuting
90 establishment, the yearly meeting (typically through its Ministry and Advancement Committee) appoints

91 a committee of welcome to attend the opening session of the new quarterly and provide assistance or
92 advice as it begins to conduct business.

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

99 Whichever body lays down the quarterly meeting appoints a committee to assist with the
100 arrangements, or may ask the yearly meeting's Ministry and Advancement Committee to appoint such a
101 committee. This committee should see to it that provision is made for the archiving of the meeting's
102 records in a manner and location which keeps them accessible to Illinois Yearly Meeting. Deposit in the
103 University of Illinois Library is recommended for this purpose. If the quarterly meeting has a treasury and
104 other property, the committee should see that these are disposed of in an appropriate fashion, such as
105 transferring them to the yearly meeting, dividing them among the monthly meetings, or donating them to
106 some other Friends or charitable organization. The advice of Friends who were involved in the quarterly
107 meeting should be a major consideration in deciding how to dispose of property.

108 *Monthly meetings which do not belong to a quarterly meeting*

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

115 For historical reasons, Illinois Yearly Meeting now includes a number of monthly meetings which
116 are not part of a quarterly meeting. Such meetings may find that some of the functions of a quarterly
117 meeting are well-served by other regional gatherings. However, business which is strictly internal to
118 Illinois Yearly Meeting is not generally considered at such gatherings.

119 Specifically, regional gatherings which are not quarterly meetings of Illinois Yearly Meeting may
120 not set up or lay down a preparative meeting as part of Illinois Yearly Meeting. Nor does Illinois Yearly
121 Meeting require that the approval of such gatherings be secured before a monthly meeting or quarterly
122 meeting is set up or laid down as part of Illinois Yearly Meeting. Proposals for setting up or laying down
123 meetings which are part of Illinois Yearly Meeting but not part of a quarterly meeting are directed to the
124 Continuing Committee or to the yearly meeting; see 'Setting up, laying down and reaffiliation of monthly
125 meetings', pp. xx-xx; 'Preparative meetings', pp. xx-xx; and 'Setting up and laying down quarterly
126 meetings', pp. xx-xx.

1

1 Appendix A: Sample Membership Record

2 The following form may be used for keeping the membership records of a monthly meeting.
3 This form is intended only as a sample; meetings should feel free to alter it or design their own forms,
4 according to their needs.

5 Some meetings may not recognize all the categories of membership mentioned on the form,
6 such as birthright membership and associate membership.

7 Some information included on the form, such as data about members' families, may be useful
8 but not strictly necessary for meetings to record. Meetings are urged to consider carefully what
9 information to gather, and how much of this information they will regard as optional.

10 Meetings may receive requests for information in their records, from individuals researching
11 their family histories or for other reasons. Clear policies should be adopted about when such
12 information may be shared. These policies should be made clear to new members as they provide
13 their data for the records.

14 Membership Record

15 Record number: _____ Record closed

16 Name: _____

17 Previous name(s): _____

18 Contact Information

19 Address: _____

20 _____

21 Telephone number(s): _____

22 E-mail address(es): _____

23 Admission Data

24 Date of Admission: _____ by birth or adoption
25 by application
26 by transfer from _____

27 Membership Type: full
28 associate, expires on _____

29 Termination Data

30 Date of Termination: _____ by death
31 by release
32 by transfer to _____

33 Remarks:

34 Personal and Family Data

35 Birthdate: _____ Place of birth: _____

36 _____ Is/was a member?

37 **Father's Name:** _____

38 Birthdate: _____ Location: _____

39 **Mother's Name:** _____

40 Birthdate: _____ Location: _____

41 **Marriage or Civil Union 1 to:** _____

42 Date: _____ Location: _____

43 **Marriage or Civil Union 2** to: _____

44 Date: _____ Location: _____

45 **Marriage or Civil Union 3** to: _____

46 Date: _____ Location: _____

47 **Child/Stepchild 1:** _____

48 Birthdate: _____ Location: _____

49 **Child/Stepchild 2:** _____

50 Birthdate: _____ Location: _____

51 **Child/Stepchild 3:** _____

52 Birthdate: _____ Location: _____

53 **Child/Stepchild 4:** _____

54 Birthdate: _____ Location: _____

55 **Child/Stepchild 5:** _____

56 Birthdate: _____ Location: _____

1 Meeting for Worship

2 Introduction

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

14 Preparing for meeting for worship

15 Preparation for the next week’s meeting for worship begins with the closing of meeting the
 16 week before. Friends seek God during the week by engaging in personal reflection, prayer or
 17 meditation, journaling, and reading the Bible or other spiritual literature. Friends who engage in such
 18 spiritual practices throughout the week may more readily enter worship prepared in mind and spirit.
 19 Taking time from the busyness of life to experience even brief moments of awareness of God’s
 20 presence sows the seed for deeper spiritual engagement. Meetings are encouraged to provide
 21 opportunities for Friends to share the spiritual dimensions of their lives, by organizing retreats,
 22 workshops, spiritual formation groups, or other gatherings.

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

32 **Beginning meeting**

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

37 **Centering**

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

41 For some Friends the process of "centering," of spontaneously emptying the mind is
42 difficult. Some have engaged in various practices to still their minds so that the Divine Presence can
43 be felt, heard and obeyed. The practices that work for one may not work for another; however, the
44 practices that are described here have been found to be helpful in centering at the beginning of
45 worship. Positioning the body in a restful yet alert position is a starting point. Many Friends sit with
46 their feet on the floor with hands in their lap. Some Friends keep their eyes open; others close them.
47 Few people can achieve inward silence immediately but find instead that they must release
48 impediments gradually. Some pray; some hold each person in the room in the Light; some engage in
49 self-examination; some contemplate mental images and others may silently repeat a passage or
50 mantra. Through these means, one loses the complexity of thought, focuses inwardly and enters a
51 period of expectant waiting. The particular technique is less important than is the creation of a
52 condition of being fully present. Even a few Friends who are centered can enable others to more
53 readily reach that state of consciousness as they remember that they are already in the presence of
54 God. Those at a meeting for worship generally experience a deepening of the quality of the silence as
55 the meeting settles.

56 In some meetings for worship, distractions are prevalent and individual Friends or the
57 community as a whole may need to work to re-center on the movements of the Spirit. Distractions
58 may take the form of outward disturbances or of unsettling thoughts or feelings. When dealing with
59 distractions, it is helpful to turn back to a place of expectant waiting rather than trying to suppress the
60 distracting thoughts.

61 **Communal Worship**

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

68 The discernment is a communal, collective process. Active participation in this communal
69 discernment is not compatible with focusing one's mind on other activities such as reading and
70 journaling. All in attendance have a responsibility for the quality of worship. We do not appoint
71 clergy to conduct the worship or deliver a sermon. We humbly listen together for how God leads us in
72 worship.

73 **Vocal ministry**

74 Any worshipper present in meeting may experience the influence of the Holy Spirit or Spirit
75 of God leading them to speak. It is important when feeling led in this way to discern whether the call
76 to speak is authentic. A rightly led message advances the spiritual life of the community and of its
77 individual members. The speaker serves as an instrument through which the Spirit ministers; the
78 message pulls others into the stream of the Living Waters; deepening the worship.

79 There is no mechanical procedure or inviolable rule for determining when to speak, but the
80 following advices can be helpful:

- 81 • What one speaks in meeting for worship arises out of one's own experience. When speaking of
82 spiritual matters, share based on what you know at first hand.
- 83 • Avoid self-involvement and a focus on your own personal or emotional needs. Speak as ministry
84 to the meeting rather than as therapy to yourself.
- 85 • Ministry is of a religious or spiritual nature. While a religious life has political and intellectual
86 consequences that may give rise to vocal ministry, messages are best delivered in a manner that
87 emphasizes their spiritual grounding. Friends are cautioned against messages that only promote a
88 political agenda, rally people to a cause or present an intellectual system of theology.
- 89 • Messages may continue a thread from ministry delivered earlier in a meeting. However, it is
90 usually best to avoid responding directly to a previous message. Give other speakers the benefit
91 of the doubt that they are speaking from a leading. If their contribution seems wrong to you,
92 consider what there might be of value in it, rather than correcting or debating.
- 93 • An individual may discern an authentic message that is solely for himself or herself rather than
94 for the assembled body. The individual should rest in the knowledge that such messages are an
95 invaluable part of the worship experience even though not verbally shared.
- 96 • Friends often experience a call to speak as something that may be resisted but cannot be held
97 back. A Friend who feels impelled to speak should do so.

- 98 • Often Friends don't have a well formed message as they begin to speak but rather have a few
99 words or phrases that may shift in focus as the ministry is being shared. This results from
100 speaking spontaneously as led rather than crafting a message in advance. Friends are encouraged
101 to speak even if the message is not fully composed.
- 102 • Friends are tenderly advised to speak loudly and clearly enough to be understood. Except in very
103 small meetings it is normal to rise when speaking in order to heard.
- 104 • A period of silence traditionally follows vocal ministry. Others who wish to speak are urged to
105 wait until the meeting has had time to absorb the previous message back into the silence.
- 106 • When many Friends offer vocal ministry with little silence between them, a Friend may rise and
107 remain silent as a way of enabling the meeting to re-experience waiting worship.
- 108 • A person does not generally speak more than once in a given meeting for worship.
- 109 • Messages are best stated simply and briefly.
- 110 • Some Friends engage in vocal ministry with some frequency; others find that they are seldom
111 called to speak. Both those who engage in vocal ministry and those that do not are equally called
112 to active participation in the meeting. The absence or presence of vocal ministry is not in itself a
113 reflection of the quality of worship. Many meetings are marked by a deep stillness yet there is no
114 vocal ministry. Those who provide silent ministry help the meeting to reach or maintain a state of
115 focused, attentive waiting on the presence of God.

116 **The gathered meeting**

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

124 **Closing meeting**

125 Ideally, the meeting ends when the gathered Friends collectively feel a sense of conclusion
126 and release. While in present day practice, the time of a meeting for worship is often scheduled for an
127 hour in length, there may be times when there is a sense that worship needs to continue longer. The
128 clerk of the meeting or a designated member of the worship and ministry or other similar committee
129 is given responsibility for discerning when the meeting is free to conclude and signals this by offering
130 to shake hands with a nearby person. Others present then shake hands with those around them unless
131 it is strongly felt that the meeting needs to continue.

132 There are several different practices that may follow the end of meeting for worship. In some
133 meetings there is a time to express joys and sorrows; in others a time to make prayer requests. In
134 larger meetings, a member of the worship and ministry or some similar committee will introduce
135 himself or herself so that Friends who have concerns or questions may share them after the rise of
136 meeting. Some meetings ask all those present to introduce themselves; others ask that newcomers or

137 those who have been absent for a period of time introduce themselves to the body. As a final practice,
138 most meetings allow time for announcements. These may be given by the individual most involved in
139 the activity or event to be shared. In other cases, announcements may be provided to the clerk or other
140 designated individual to read. Following announcements there is often a time for social exchange and
141 a time to get to know newcomers.

142 **Logistics**

143 In many meetings, Friends gather for worship once a week. A number of meetings also hold
144 mid-week worship.

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

150 Someone may be designated to greet people as they arrive. Many meetings have pamphlets
151 available for newcomers that briefly describe the form of Quaker worship. In some meetings, those
152 arriving late enter the meeting room as soon as they arrive; in other meetings, there is a designated
153 space where latecomers gather and begin to center. This practice serves to minimize disruptions to the
154 deepening silence. Then, at a designated time, often fifteen minutes into worship, they enter the
155 meeting room. Even if this is not the practice of a particular meeting, latecomers should refrain from
156 entering the meeting room while someone is offering vocal ministry.

157 Children may attend the entire meeting for worship. More often, children attend either the
158 first fifteen minutes of meeting or the last fifteen minutes. Such decisions are made with
159 consideration of the experience that the meeting seeks the children to have. As children mature, they
160 are encouraged to participate in the entire meeting for worship.

161 **Dealing with problems in meeting for worship**

162 There are times when the behavior of a particular individual interferes with the quality of
163 worship. Sometimes a Friend may engage in frequent vocal ministry, the content, length or tone of
164 which is of concern. At other times, a worshiper who is experiencing mental illness may attend
165 meeting and cause disruptions. To address such situations, the worship and ministry or other similar
166 committee should consider how to proceed. In making a determination as to how to respond to this
167 person's behavior, consideration is given to the degree to which it affects the quality of worship. The
168 committee should also consider whether the disruption to worship is an individual occurrence or a
169 continuing concern.