

BYLAWS
of
NORTH SEATTLE FRIENDS CHURCH

ARTICLE I – THE SOCIETY

North Seattle Friends Church (a Quaker Meeting) is a Washington nonprofit corporation (***Church or Meeting***). It is an independent Monthly Meeting in the Religious Society of Friends.

The Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) first formed as a Christian movement in 17th century England, recognizing that Christ can speak through all people. Inasmuch as Quakers have a unique usage of language, the following list describes the meaning of words contained in these bylaws.

- a. Clerk – Clerks preside over Meetings for Business, are empowered to articulate the Sense of the Meeting, and are often called on to speak and sign officially for the Meeting.
- b. Friend – Denotes a member or attender who associates with the Religious Society of Friends and follows Quaker practice.
- c. In the manner of Friends – Follows traditional Quaker practice.
- d. Meeting – Traditional language for those who gather regularly in Meeting for Worship. The word church may be used in place of Meeting.
- e. Meeting for Business – Another term for the Meeting for Worship for the conduct of business.
- f. Minute – A statement, which constitutes a decision of the Meeting on an item of business by those in attendance at a given Meeting for Business. It is used in place of resolution or statement of approved action.
- g. Recording - When it becomes clear that a person is indeed doing public ministry, then we make an official record of what God seems to be doing. That person is “recorded” as a minister among Friends.
- h. Sense of the Meeting – A process of coming to agreement through discernment with the understanding that way forward emerges from waiting on God for leading. The clerk will articulate the Sense of the Meeting, which is recorded in a Minute.

ARTICLE II – MEMBERSHIP

Section 1: Membership is open to all people who want to join the members of the Church in their Christ-centered Quaker journey and practice of group discernment.

Section 2: The process of becoming a member requires spiritual discernment. This process is facilitated by Administery. A person is enrolled as a member upon recommendation by Administery and approval by the Meeting for Business.

Section 3: Members are those persons who have made formal application and been accepted into membership in any Meeting for Business of North Seattle Friends Church.

- a. Resident Active Members are those who have been approved for membership and are active participants in the life of the Meeting. Resident Active Members constitute the active decision-making body for the church.
- b. Non-resident Members are those who no longer are active in the life of the Meeting, but wish to maintain their connection with North Seattle Friends Church.
- c. Associate membership is available for children of members. Children of members may apply for membership when they reach an age where they can discern for themselves whether they wish to become regular members.
- d. The Recording Clerk will keep or cause to be kept an accurate list of the Church's resident active, nonresident, and associate members.

Section 4: Any member may withdraw from membership at any time by a letter addressed to Administery. Membership may be terminated upon recommendation by Administery and approval by the Meeting for Business. In either case, termination of membership becomes effective as of the date the decision is recorded by the Meeting for Business.

ARTICLE III – MEETINGS FOR WORSHIP

Section 1: Regular Meetings for Worship are held every Sunday morning in the Church's Meeting House, unless the Meeting for Business decides otherwise.

Section 2: Special Meetings for Worship, including weddings, memorials, or other observances, may be held according to procedures established by the Meeting for Business and overseen by Administery.

ARTICLE IV – MEETING FOR WORSHIP FOR THE CONDUCT OF BUSINESS

Section 1: Final authority for management of the Corporation shall be vested in the Meeting for Business, which may delegate responsibility to individuals or groups. The decisions of the Meeting and its subordinate groups shall be made in the manner of Friends as defined in the Appendix. Interested attenders as well as members are generally encouraged to attend and

take part in the Meeting for Business. However, responsibility for decisions, remains with resident active members of the Meeting. The Clerk is empowered to discern the Sense of the Meeting and present a Minute that reflects the collective sense of God's leading. When a Minute reflects this Sense of the Meeting, it is approved by the members.

Section 2: Meetings for Business may be held as needed, to be determined by the Clerk in consultation with Administery. This will include one annual meeting as required by the corporation for approval of the nomination of officers.

Section 3: Each resident active member, as listed in the church records, must receive notice of Meetings for Business at least 7 days, but not more than 50 days, before the meeting. The notice must state the purpose or purposes of the meeting as well as the place and time of the meeting.

Section 4: The quorum for any Meeting for Business is 10% of all the resident active members.

ARTICLE V – OFFICERS

Section 1: The Clerk of the Meeting must be a member of the Meeting. The Clerk serves for a term of one year, renewable at the discretion of the Meeting for Business. The Clerk's primary responsibilities are:

- a. To preside at all sessions of Meeting for Business, or to delegate that role, calling upon Friends to speak, encouraging conscientious consideration of business according to Quaker practice, aiding Friends in finding unity in Divine Will, and expressing it in a Minute after a decision is reached. Unity does not mean unanimity. It is the Clerk that is empowered to discern the Sense of the Meeting and way forward if there is disagreement. (See the Appendix.)
- b. To speak for the Meeting as a whole, serving as spokesperson, or delegating that role, by signing official documents, contracts, signing official letters of correspondence (such as traveling minutes), and otherwise making sure instructions of the Meeting for Business are carried out.
- c. When signing documents for the Church or when referred to in any reports, applications, or other documents, the Clerk may use the title of President.

Section 2: The Recording Clerk, who must be a member of the Meeting, assists the Clerk at Meetings for Business. The Recording Clerk serves for a term of one year, renewable at the discretion of the Meeting for Business. The Recording Clerk formulates the minutes of all Meetings for Business, making sure that they are properly preserved and available to all. When signing documents for the Church or when referred to in any reports, applications, or other documents, the Recording Clerk may use the title of Secretary.

Section 3: The Treasurer, who must be a member of the Meeting, acts as the treasurer of the Church and oversees receipt and disbursement of all Church funds and maintains accurate bookkeeping of those transactions. The Treasurer serves for a term of one year, renewable at the discretion of the Meeting for Business. The Treasurer works closely with Administery and serves as a member, reporting regularly to the Meeting for Business, proposing an annual spending plan, and managing funds according to the approved spending plan and other instructions from the Meeting for Business.

Section 4: The Meeting for Business may establish any needed positions for achievement of its purposes and appoint individuals to fill these roles. Each appointed person is authorized to act within the terms of the appointment.

Section 5: Terms of service begin July 1. Selection of officers are made by decision of the Meeting for Business upon recommendation by the Nominating Committee prior to July, or at any other Meeting for Business to fill a vacancy. An officer may be removed by action of the Meeting for Business.

Section 6: No loan may be made by the Church to any of its officers. Those responsible for making a loan to an officer are jointly and severally liable to the Church for the amount of the loan until it is repaid.

ARTICLE VI – ELDERS AND TRUSTEES

Section 1: Elders are responsible for the spiritual health of the Meeting and the vitality of its public ministry. Elders, who must be members, are nominated by the Nominating Committee, and generally serve a three-year term, unless otherwise determined by the Meeting for Business at the time of selection. An Elder's term may be renewed at the discretion of the Meeting for Business. Any Elder may be removed by action of the Meeting for Business.

Section 2: Trustees are responsible for coordinating financial matters, insurance matters, contractual commitments, and the maintenance of buildings and properties owned by the Meeting. Trustees, who must be members, are nominated by the Nominating Committee, and generally serve a three-year term, unless otherwise determined by the Meeting for Business at the time of selection. A Trustee's term may be renewed at the discretion of the Meeting for Business. Any Trustee may be removed by action of the Meeting for Business.

ARTICLE VII – ADMINISTRY

Section 1: Administery is composed of all the Elders, all the Trustees, the Clerk, the Treasurer, and the Pastor.

Section 2: Administery has oversight of the following responsibilities:

- a. Promote vital Meetings for Worship by discerning, supporting, and encouraging the health of worship, including both programmed elements and open worship and by keeping the basic principles of Quaker worship before those attending.
- b. Support other events that promote spiritual growth.
- c. Encourage and support those seeking membership, and recommend potential members to the Meeting for Business after a process of discernment.
- d. Become well acquainted with members and regular attenders, giving encouragement needed and lovingly helping those whose actions or attitudes cause concern.
- e. Promote the development of leadership within the Meeting, recognizing and encouraging gifts of ministry and offering discernment and support for those led to seek Recording as a Friends Minister.
- f. Facilitate the process of Recording as a Friends Minister by the Church if appropriate.
- g. Supervise and support the work of the pastor.
- h. Recommend the calling of pastors and other ministers.
- i. Appoint members of the Nominating Committee.
- j. Work with the Clerk to call a Meeting for Business.
- k. Serve the spiritual health of the Meeting.
- l. Review expenses, anticipate needs and estimate funds needed, and encourage Friends to contribute toward the financial needs of the Meeting.
- m. Prepare the annual spending plan for timely presentation to Meeting for Business; monitor the income and expenses of the Meeting during the fiscal year; consider special expenses; and recommend to the Meeting for Business necessary actions as they become known.
- n. Counsel the Treasurer on handling investments, mortgages, and funds, and assist the Treasurer in accounting for all of them, as well as conducting reviews and, if necessary, audits of the records.
- o. Adopt a Minute to open bank accounts and authorize such actions. This includes the review and approval of the terms for banking and financial services utilized by the Treasurer, authorization of receipt of checks for accounts in the corporate name, and nomination to the Meeting for Business of those who will sign checks and otherwise assist the Treasurer in official capacities.
- p. Negotiate leases with long-term tenants, or delegate that role, and recommend rental charges.

- q. Manage buildings and grounds including scheduling repair and maintenance as needed.
- r. Contract for custodial and grounds maintenance or repair services as necessary, and to coordinate and recruit volunteers for working on the care of the property.
- s. Negotiate and secure the appropriate level of insurance coverage for assets of the Meeting.

Section 3: All decisions must be approved by the Meeting for Business unless the authority is delegated to a committee, task force, or designated individual, either through the approved spending plan, committee responsibilities, or by action of the Meeting for Business.

ARTICLE VIII - COMMITTEES

Section 1: The Meeting for Business has authority to create committees, disband committees and to monitor the work it has delegated to committees.

Section 2: The Nominating Committee is appointed by Administry, and committee members serve a three-year term, unless otherwise determined at the time of appointment. The Nominating Committee consists of two or more resident active members and the pastor. The Nominating Committee has these responsibilities:

- a. Organize the annual selection of effective and faithful officers and committee members, seeking out those with gifts and ability, discerning leadings and willingness, and explaining to candidates the obligations and functions of the appointment.
- b. Present to the Meeting for Business prior to June 30, a roster of those willing to serve the Meeting for the coming year.
- c. Fill vacancies as they occur during the year, bringing new nominations to the Meeting for Business as required.

ARTICLE IX — PASTORS

Section 1: Knowing that spiritual authority is derived from the inward work of God's Spirit, the Church does not recognize authority based upon title or rank. At the same time, the Church acknowledges that a Meeting may discern that its collective faithfulness is enhanced under the guidance of a pastor. The Meeting may therefore provide financial support to a pastor, according to the Meeting's ability and the pastor's needs. Providing financial support is meant to release the pastor's time for service, to the benefit of all friends.

Section 2: The Meeting for Business, acting on the recommendation of Administry, determines the duties, term of office, and level of financial support granted to a pastor. Terms of service begin July 1 and continue as long as it is mutually beneficial to the Meeting and the pastor. However, this does not preclude the Meeting from setting time specific terms. Either the pastor or the Meeting for Business may terminate the relationship with 90 days' notice.

Section 3: The pastor should be recognized for a life guided by the Holy Spirit and for gifts of discernment, public speaking, and spiritual leadership. The pastor's primary responsibilities are:

- a. Model and share the love of Christ in ways that are honest, challenging, thought provoking, and promote the spiritual growth of the Meeting.
- b. Teach the vital application of Scripture and Friends' distinctives and testimonies (such as the peace testimony, simplicity and equality of persons).
- c. Recognize and respond to the changing organizational needs of the Meeting.
- d. Nurture and maintain ties within the larger Religious Society of Friends.
- e. Promote leadership and active participation in the life of the Meeting.
- f. Supervise all additional staff hired by the Meeting.

Section 4: Administery is responsible to work with the pastor with the intent of ensuring health and well-being of both the pastor and the Meeting. To that end, vacations, regular days off, and if appropriate, a sabbatical or temporary leave will be arranged.

Section 5: In the event of a vacancy in the position of pastor, a Pastoral Search Committee may be appointed by the Meeting for Business upon nomination by Administery. The committee can be comprised of both members and attenders of the Meeting. However, it will consist of at least three resident active members. The Pastoral Search Committee will seek guidance from the Meeting for Business about current needs for pastoral ministry, then recommend a qualified candidate to the Meeting for Business, which has final authority in extending a call to ministry.

ARTICLE X – PROPERTY AND FINANCIAL COMMITMENTS

The Meeting for Business may authorize Administery to negotiate purchase or sale of real estate and other properties as needed for its purposes. At the direction of Administery, Trustees and Officers are authorized to sign any real estate documents. Final approval of any such action is retained by the Meeting for Business. In conformity to Society of Friends tradition, the Meeting is a steward for the property and will use its property to assist the larger community in accord with its testimonies. The Meeting will avoid financial entanglements that it cannot reasonably meet or that unfairly exploit other persons.

ARTICLE XI – CONTROL OF FUNDS

Section 1: The Meeting for Business has exclusive control and power over all grants, contributions and other financial assistance made by the Church, all of which must be in furtherance of the Church's purposes.

Section 2: The Meeting for Business, depending on the amount of funding, has the power to make grants, contributions and otherwise render financial assistance to any organization organized and operated exclusively for exempt purposes set forth in Section 501(c)(3) of the Code, provided the assistance is in furtherance of the Church's purposes.

Section 3: Administery will review all requests for funds from other organizations and require that the requests specify the use to which the funds will be put. On approval of the request, payment of the funds may be authorized to that organization.

Section 4: The Church may, in its absolute discretion, refuse to make any grants or contributions or otherwise render financial assistance to or for any or all the purposes for which funds are requested.

Section 5: On approval of any request as described in Section 3 above, the Church may solicit funds for that specific project or purpose, but may at any time exercise its right to withdraw approval and to use the funds received for other religious or charitable purposes. The Church may refuse to accept any contribution which does not allow the Church complete control and discretion to use funds in furtherance of the Church's purposes.

ARTICLE XII – INDEMNIFICATION

Section 1: Power to Indemnify. The Church has the following powers regarding indemnification:

a. Power to Indemnify.

- (1) To the full extent permitted by applicable law, the Church may indemnify against all Expenses each individual or entity (in the case of an agent that is an entity) who was or is made a party to any Proceeding or is involved in any Proceeding (including as a witness) because:
 - (a) the individual is or was an Administery member, elder, trustee, officer, pastor, employee, or agent of the corporation or the entity is or was an agent of the corporation; or
 - (b) the individual while an Administery member, elder, trustee, officer, pastor, employee, or agent of the Church (or an entity, while serving as an agent for the Church), is or was serving at the request of the Church as a director, officer, employee, agent, trustee, or in any other capacity of another corporation or of a partnership, joint venture, trust, or other enterprise, including service regarding any employee benefit plan.
- (2) This power to indemnify exists whether the basis of the Proceeding is alleged action or omission in an official capacity or in any other capacity while serving as an Administery member, elder, trustee, officer, pastor, employee, agent, trustee, or in any other capacity. This indemnification continues as to an individual who is no

longer a director, officer, employee, or agent of the corporation, and inures to the benefit of the individual's heirs and personal representatives.

(a) The term ***Proceeding*** means any threatened, pending, or completed action, suit, or other proceeding, whether civil, criminal, administrative, or investigative, and whether formal or informal.

(b) The term ***Expenses*** means any judgment, settlement amount, loss, expense, or other liability (including attorneys' fees, costs, fines, ERISA excise taxes or penalties, and amounts to be paid in settlement) actually or reasonably incurred or suffered by the indemnified individual because of a Proceeding.

b. **Power to Pay Expenses in Advance of Final Disposition.** The Church may pay Expenses incurred in defending any Proceeding in advance of its final disposition (referred to as ***Advancement of Expenses***). But any Advancement of Expenses may be made to or on behalf of an Administery member, elder, trustee, officer, pastor, employee, or agent only if the indemnified person Delivers to the Church:

(1) a written affirmation of the Administery member's, elder's, trustee's, officer's, pastor's, employee's, or agent's good faith belief that he/she/they has met the standard of conduct described in RCW 23B.08.510; and

(2) a written undertaking by the indemnified individual to repay all amounts advanced if it is determined by final judicial decision (and no further right to appeal exists) that the indemnified individual is not entitled to be indemnified under this section or otherwise. The undertaking may be unsecured and may be accepted without regard to the indemnified individual's financial ability to make repayment.

c. **Power to Enter into Contracts.** The Church may enter into any contract with any person who is or was an Administery member, elder, trustee, officer, pastor, employee, or agent of the Church regarding indemnification by the Church, and may create a trust fund, grant a security interest in property of the Church, or use other means (including a letter of credit) to ensure the payment of any amounts that may be necessary to provide any indemnification under this Article.

d. **Expansion of Powers.** If the Washington Nonprofit Corporation Act (***Act***) is amended to expand or increase the power of the Church to indemnify, to pay expenses in advance of final disposition, to enter into any contract, or to expand or increase any similar or related power, then, without any further requirement of action by the Church, the powers described in this Article will be expanded and increased to the fullest extent permitted by the Act, as amended.

e. **Limitation of Powers.** No indemnification may be provided under this Article to any person if the Church is prohibited by the Act or other applicable law from paying for the indemnification. For example, no indemnification will be provided to any person, whether or not involving action in an official capacity, for any Expenses incurred because of:

- (1) any act or omission finally adjudged to be intentional misconduct or a knowing violation of law;
- (2) conduct finally adjudged to be in violation of RCW 23B.08.310 (which relates to unlawful distributions to a corporation's shareholders); or
- (3) any transaction for which it is finally adjudged that the person personally received a benefit in money, property, or services to which that person was not legally entitled.

Section 2: The Church, with approval of the Meeting for Business, may indemnify and provide Advancement of Expenses to Administery members, elders, trustees, officers, pastors, employees, and agents of the Church.

Section 3: The Church may purchase and maintain insurance, at its expense, to protect itself and any Administery member, elder, trustee, officer, pastor, employee, or agent of the Church or who, while an Administery member, elder, trustee, officer, employee, or agent of the Church, is or was a director, officer, partner, trustee, employee, or agent of another corporation, partnership, joint venture, trust, employee benefit plan, or other enterprise against any Expense, whether or not the Church would have the power to indemnify the person against that Expense under the Act.

Section 4: Any repeal or modification of this Article will not adversely affect any right existing at the time of that repeal or modification.

Section 5: If any part of this Article or any application of this Article is invalid, unenforceable, or contrary to applicable law, the remainder of this Article, or the application of the provision to persons or circumstances other than those as to which it is held invalid, unenforceable, or contrary to applicable law, will continue in full force and effect.

Section 6: For purposes of this Article, "applicable law" means the Act in effect at the date when indemnification is sought, or the Act in effect at the date of the action, omission, or other event giving rise to the situation for which indemnification may be sought, whichever is selected by the person seeking indemnification.

ARTICLE XIII – ADMINISTRATIVE PROVISIONS

Section 1: Definitions. Unless the context clearly requires otherwise, the definitions in this Article XIII, Section 1 apply throughout these Bylaws:

- a. ***Deliver, Delivered, and Delivery*** means
 - (1) mailing;
 - (2) transmission by facsimile equipment, for purposes of delivering a demand, consent, notice, or waiver to the Church or one of its Administry members, elders, trustees, officers, pastors, or members;
 - (3) Electronic Transmission, in accordance with the Administry member's, elder's, trustee's, officer's, pastor's, or member's consent, for purposes of delivering a demand, consent, notice, or waiver to the Church or one of Administry members, elders, trustees, officers, pastors, or members under *Article XIII, Section 2*.
- b. ***Electronic Transmission*** and ***Electronically Transmitted*** means an electronic communication
 - (1) not directly involving the physical transfer of a Record in a Tangible Medium,
 - (2) that may be retained, retrieved, and reviewed by the sender and the recipient, and
 - (3) that may be directly reproduced in a Tangible Medium by a sender and recipient.
- c. ***Execute, Executes, or Executed*** means:
 - (1) signed, with respect to a written Record, and
 - (2) Electronically Transmitted along with sufficient information to determine the sender's identity, with respect to an Electronic Transmission.
- d. ***Record*** means information inscribed on a Tangible Medium or contained in an Electronic Transmission.
- e. ***Tangible Medium*** means a writing, copy of a writing, facsimile, or a physical reproduction, on paper or on other tangible material.
- f. Any term not defined in these bylaws has the definition in Chapter 24.03 RCW.

Section 2: Electronic Notice.

- a. **Consent to Electronic Notice.** To consent to notice by Electronic Transmission, an Administry member, elder, trustee, officer, pastor, or resident active member must, in a Record, designate in the consent the address, location, or system to which notices may be Electronically Transmitted to the recipient. The following is an example of a consent to receive notice by Electronic Transmission: "I, _____, consent to receive

Electronically Transmitted notices at the following email address: _____. This consent applies to any notice from North Seattle Friends Church or any of its Administery members, elders, trustees, officers, pastors, employees, other agents, or members. I may change this email address by giving advance notice of the change to the Recording Clerk and the Pastor.”

- b. **Delivery of Electronic Notice.** Notice to any person who has consented to receipt of Electronically Transmitted notices may be provided notice by posting the notice on an electronic network and delivering to the person a separate Record of the posting, together with comprehensible instructions regarding how to obtain access to this posting on the electronic network.
- c. **Revocation of Consent to Electronic Notice.** Any person who has consented to receipt of notices by Electronic Transmission may revoke the consent by Delivering a revocation to the Church, in the form of a Record (sent to the attention of the Recording Clerk or the Pastor). The consent of any person is revoked if the Church is unable to Deliver by Electronic Transmission two consecutive notices given by the Church in accordance with the consent, and this inability becomes known to the Recording Clerk of the Church or other person responsible for giving the notice on behalf of the Church. The inadvertent failure by the Church to treat this inability as a revocation does not invalidate any meeting or other action.
- d. **Effective Date of Delivery.** If notice is mailed, it is deemed Delivered when deposited in the mail properly addressed to the Administery member, elder, trustee, officer, pastor, or member at his/her/their address as it appears on the records of the Church with postage prepaid. If the notice is by Electronic Transmission, it is deemed Delivered when it is transmitted in accordance with the consent of the person. Any other notice in any Tangible Medium is deemed Delivered on receipt.

ARTICLE XIV – COOPERATIVE ACTIVITIES

If approved by a Meeting for Business, the Meeting may join or cooperate with any other organization aligned with its values and purposes.

ARTICLE XV – FISCAL YEAR

The Meeting’s fiscal year shall begin on the first day of each calendar year and its financial status shall be reported to Administery monthly. The financial status shall be reported at regular Meetings for Business.

ARTICLE XVI – DISSOLUTION

Though intended to be perpetual, the Church may be dissolved by action of the Meeting for Business. This authority may not be delegated to other individuals or groups.

ARTICLE XVII – AMENDMENT

These Bylaws may be amended with the approval of the Meeting for Business at any regular or special Meeting for Business.

These bylaws were approved by the Meeting for Business on June 3 2018

Becky Wood
Becky Wood

Recording Clerk

Dated: June 3 2018

Appendix

Quaker Decision Making

Quaker decision making is rooted in the conviction that Christ is a true reflection of God and is actively partnering with us in the human endeavor through the Holy Spirit. A corollary conviction is that the spirit and purposes of God can be known and followed through the process of group discernment. For Friends there is no separation of the sacred and the secular, so the practice of group discernment is applicable to normal, practical life decisions as well as spiritual or crisis situations. This has been the basis of Friends' polity for over 360 years.

There are specific steps to help a group discern together that Friends have found foundational over the centuries.

1. *All decision making begins with alignment with God's Spirit and perspective.*

This means that participants intentionally put aside their own personal desires for certain outcomes. It means holding all the other participants in respect—forgiving those who may have wounded you or caused you harm. It means entering into a process in which you are a unique and important part of an adventure to see how God's Spirit is leading. This process of alignment is often accomplished in a time of worshipful silence as the group enters into the Meeting for Worship for Business.

2. *Information is presented to the group.*

The goal of this information is to give the group everything they need to discern well. This means that the clerk needs to be realistic about what portion of a

decision can be made in the time allotted. It means that information needs to be communicated in ways that folks can grasp it. There may need to be special accommodations for those with sight or hearing disabilities or those for whom English is a second language.

3. *The group waits in listening silence to perceive what God's Spirit might be communicating.*

In this step of the process, each member centers her/his/their mind in "neutral gear" and becomes attentive to what thoughts, perceptions, emotions are rising within them. Don't censor them; just observe what is coming to your awareness. This is not the time to speak or prepare what you want to say. It is a time to let the Spirit flow through your giftedness to be gift to the group.

4. *Group members offer up what has come to them in the waiting silence and work together to see how these perceptions fit together.*

This step is much like putting together a jigsaw puzzle without knowing what the picture looks like. As members of the group share with the group what was coming to them in the silence, a pattern begins to emerge. It may be a simple and easy "yes." It may be a delightful experience as the various perceptions fit together in a holistic way that no one idea would have been able to accomplish. Other times it looks like an unresolvable conflict. But as the group keeps asking Spirit how these opposed leadings fit together, something new and important is often birthed. This step may take time. It is acceptable for the group to work on this step over time. A decision is not forced to be still born; rather it is delayed with the full understanding that folks will continue conversations and prayer to see how God is going to work this out. Sometimes the opposition is not bridged and over time each person learns to hold those with whom they disagree in love and respect.

Friends understand that not all decisions can be made in total unity. Provision is made for disagreement. If a person does not agree with the decision, but does not feel led to stop the group from proceeding, they can remain silent or be minuted as "standing aside." If a person feels that they in good conscience must block the action, they say that they are "unable to unite." At that point the usual practice is for the clerk to delay the decision and the group seek to resolve the impasse outside of the Meeting for Business. A Minute is written to articulate what the issues are that cause the group to not be in unity. This is a very helpful record that makes it possible for the group to pick up the listening process later without having to go over the same ground again. The group can start from where the process left off. However, there may be extenuating circumstances when the clerk

recognizes that the spirit of blocking a decision is obstruction rather than Spirit-led leading. In that rare case, the decision may proceed with the minuted notation that the person was “unable to unite.”

5. *When the group has a common sense of “yes-ness,” the clerk articulates this understanding.*

When the clerk senses that a decision is forming, she/he/they begins a gentle process of trial and error wording that is attempting to capture the essence of what the group is agreeing upon. If the decision is complex or difficult, this statement tells the truth about the dynamics of the decision making. For instance, if there was concern about one aspect of the decision, that concern would be noted in this statement of understanding.

6. *When the group is satisfied that this reflects what has happened and what the decision is, it is written into a Minute.*

The goal of the Minute is to articulate the truth of what the group has done and is deciding. Often the group waits in silent upholding while the clerk and recording clerk create this Minute.

7. *The Minute is read back to the group to double-check that it has captured both the spirit and the facts of the decision. If it does accurately reflect the decision of the Meeting, the clerk calls for verbal approval.*

This is the final step in verifying that there is clearness to move forward with the decision. The decision is minuted by the Recording Clerk.

8. *Each person honors the decision as a leading from God.*

This is an important discipline of every participant. The process has had much time and care to listen to God and one another well. The process may continue over time. However, once the decision is agreed upon, each participant commits to honoring the decision. If a member was not present in the group discernment process when the decision was made, he/she/they commits to trusting the group to have listened well. This means that folks do not start to undo it in the parking lot or in subsequent phone calls. It may be a painful decision for some, but each member of the group commits to dealing with their/his/her own concerns and griefs in a way that allows them to continue to offer their gifts to the whole.

[For further exploration and the source material for these steps in Quaker decision making, see *Practicing Discernment Together, Finding God’s Way Forward in Decision Making* by Fendall, Wood and Bishop.]