

**Advices and Queries on Corporate Discernment
from *Interim Faith and Practice 2014*, NEYM except where noted**

ADVICES

1. *Being orderly come together [you are] not to spend time with needless, unnecessary and fruitless discourses; but to proceed in the wisdom of God, not in the way of the world, as a worldly assembly of men, by hot contests, by seeking to outspoke and overreach one another in discourse as if it were controversy between party and party of men, or two sides violently striving for dominion, not deciding affairs by the greater vote. But in the wisdom, love and fellowship of God, in gravity, patience, meekness, in unity and concord, submitting one to another in lowliness of heart, and in the holy Spirit of truth and righteousness, all things [are] to be carried on; by hearing, and determining every matter coming before you in love, coolness, gentleness and dear unity. - Edward Burrough 1662*
2. Remember that we are only able to act according to our present sense and judgment, in the faith that the light we are given is enough for our needs today. Let us be humble both with one another and in anticipating that there may be more and different steps tomorrow.
3. Think it possible that you may be mistaken.
4. In searching for the will of God in matters before the meeting, Friends are seeking the truth, so that all may join in its affirmation. We are not engaging in debate, or trying to win an argument. Know that working together as a community of spiritual seeking is often more important than simply getting things done.
5. On entering the meeting, avoid falling into conversation. Take your seat quietly, entering into a receptive silence. As the meeting moves forward, listen carefully to what others say, that you do not burden the meeting by repetition. Allow time for quiet reflection after each speaker so that their words may sink in and receive due consideration. Should you disagree with what has been said, show respect for those who have spoken by offering another viewpoint in a humble spirit.
6. Address the clerk rather than another individual and speak only to the matter under consideration. Do not attempt to speak for Friends who are absent as they are not present to sense the movement of the Spirit in the gathered group.
7. Hold the clerks and the whole group in prayer, especially when difficult matters are being considered.
8. (From North Pacific YM) Friends expect unity as the outcome, not as the starting point, of communal discernment. We proceed in the peaceable spirit of the light of Truth, with forbearance and warm affection for one another. Light will be shed on matters from many angles. We trust that as Truth is spoken, its power cannot be resisted. We express our views but refrain from pressing them unduly. It is less important for any individual to be heard than it is for Truth to be given voice. Group discernment and the search for unity may require us to accept with good grace a decision of the meeting we do not entirely agree with. Contributing to the meeting's discernment is a responsibility of membership. This includes attending meetings for business and being faithful in the service of the meeting's affairs.

QUERIES

1. Do you seek the leadings of the Light in meeting for business as you do in worship?
2. How do you prepare your heart and mind for meeting for business?
3. Do you come prepared for the business at hand, having read relevant material or with committee reports ready for distribution?
4. Do you make an effort to maintain your awareness that God is with us as we work?
5. Do you proceed in a peaceable spirit with forbearance and warm affection for each other?
6. Do you trust that the Spirit has guided those involved with the process which has brought the group to its current place and do you respect the decisions that have already been made?
7. Do you attend to the clerk, speaking only when acknowledged and refraining from conversations back and forth across the room?
8. As members of a spiritual community, do you acknowledge differences and seek to settle conflicts promptly in a manner free from resentment and all forms of inward violence?
9. Do you take care to consider, in a patient, loving, and prayerful spirit, the perspective of those with whom you disagree?
10. Have you considered whether God's will for you as an individual may differ from God's will for the meeting?
11. When a decision is being reached with which you disagree, are you faithful to your responsibility to speak if led?
12. When the meeting comes to a decision, do you accept it as "our" decision rather than "theirs"?
13. Are we willing to recognize when we are in a place where we should not act, but rather wait patiently for further guidance to come?

From North Pacific Yearly Meeting:

14. Do we come into meeting for business prepared to be changed? Are we ready to let go of our individual thoughts and wishes and let the Holy Spirit lead the meeting to unity?
15. As difficult problems arise, are we careful to meet them in a spirit of love and humility, with minds open for creative solutions? How do we avoid taking sides and forming factions?
16. Do we avoid the pressure of time, neither unnecessarily prolonging nor unduly curtailing full consideration?
17. Are we aware that we speak through inaction as well as action?