

Community Agreements in Practice (12.8.24 DRAFT)

In all of our community interactions, including large meetings and small groups, either face-to-face or online, we do our best to adhere to the following agreements:

- We speak for ourselves - from our experience, from the Light we are given, and from our hearts; we express our views faithfully, with kindness, and mindful of our impact on the gathered group.
- After speaking, we release our concerns to open ourselves to new Light, fresh understandings, and the presence of the Spirit moving among us.
- We hold all serving Friends and their work in the Light with gratitude and respect.
- In both our verbal and nonverbal communication, we take care not to criticize the views of others or work to persuade them; we humbly and respectfully question or challenge ideas, not the individuals who offer them.
- We listen with respect and resilience, “hanging in” when something is hard for us to hear; we welcome respectful questions or challenges to our ideas. In turn, we humbly and respectfully ask questions to check our assumptions, understandings, and sources of disagreement.
- We endeavor to be responsible to one another. This responsibility takes many forms:
 - When, as individuals or committees, we receive an inquiry, request, or feedback from someone in our community, we take responsibility to respond lovingly and in a timely fashion and, if needed, work toward a resolution.
 - We take responsibility for the effects of our words and actions, understanding that they may cause harm despite our intentions. When we become aware of such harm, we seek to restore the relationship with another Friend and/or the community as quickly as possible and are open to loving guidance.
 - With divine assistance, we take responsibility for holding ourselves and each other accountable, and to be similarly held accountable, with love, tenderness, and compassion.

Community Guidelines in Clerked Meetings (Approved 2.9.25)

These guidelines are intended primarily for large and community-wide meetings, including Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business. Committees and other groups should consider these guidelines, and together determine how to use them in Friends decision-making process for that group.

- We hold our meetings for business in worship, seeking divine guidance.
- We take time to prepare both our hearts and minds before we meet together (e.g. reading advanced documents and holding concerns in prayer).
- We wait to speak until we are recognized by the clerk, and when we speak, we address the clerk.
- We consider carefully whether we are called to speak to a particular item and are mindful of sharing time. We try to refrain from repeating what has already been spoken and speak only to the matter under discussion. If we have not participated in previous discernment on an ongoing issue, we exercise special care in speaking to the issue.
- We allow time between speakers for the gift of the message to be processed in Spirit.
- We listen, wait, and try to respond from the Light, rather than reacting quickly to an offered message.
- When an emerging decision does not reflect our sense of the Light, but the meeting is clear to go forward, we may feel led to “stand aside.” The act of “standing aside” is an expression of community with the meeting as it seeks Way forward in Spirit.
- On rare occasions, and after spiritual searching, we may be unable either to unite with or to stand aside from a decision the meeting is ready to make and ask the group not to proceed. We understand that the meeting will make a Spirit-led decision about whether or not to go forward.
- Spiritual unity requires us to be tender and loving with one another (especially when we disagree). We seek to witness Light in the words and actions of others and seek to find how Way might open.
- When the meeting is in unity and a decision is made, we acknowledge our unity with the meeting by accepting with good grace the consequences of the decision for the meeting and for ourselves.