

Responding to Calls to Ministry

Working Procedures Approved by Central Philadelphia Monthly Meeting
June 11, 1995

FOREWORD In the early 1990s Central Philadelphia Monthly Meeting had several requests from members to "release" them or to take their work under the care of the meeting. We realized that we had no consistent process for dealing with these requests and no clear way of discerning the meeting's proper response.

In January 1993 the meeting approved that the clerk convene a committee made up of representatives of Worship and Ministry, Peace and Social Concerns, and Finance Advisory Committees to review the meeting's procedures for responding to concerns and to bring recommendations to the meeting for discussion. This document is the result of that process.

Along the way we discovered that there were many resources available for how to conduct a clearness process to help an individual discern whether she or he was called to a ministry. Therefore, these guidelines rely on the materials listed in the bibliography to provide detailed guidance on clearness. However, we found few resources addressing how the meeting could discern its role. This document was developed primarily to address that question.

We want to remind Friends who refer to this document that it is (1) written for the needs of a specific meeting and not all of its provisions will meet the needs of other meetings, and (2) it is a work in process. Over the time since the guidelines were approved we have come to recognize that some of the procedures are cumbersome and need to be streamlined and that there are some loose ends that have not been addressed. Many requests have come to the meeting that don't quite fit the guidelines and require that we adapt the procedures. Nonetheless, on the whole we have found these guidelines useful.

Our meeting has benefited greatly. The increased attention to calls to ministry has prompted members to be attentive to the movement of the Spirit in their lives. We find that this is now an active process in the life of the meeting. We share it with other meetings in hopes that it will contribute to discernment of the movements of the Spirit in your lives as well. *February 1996*

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PART ONE: DISCERNMENT OF CALLS

A central facet of our religious lives is discernment of what we are called to do with our lives. Every meeting for worship is an occasion for opening ourselves to the leading of the Spirit and seeking ways to follow the guidance that we receive. As we deepen our spiritual lives we discover a path in the outward life to conform to our spiritual journeys—perhaps we recognize the work we have been doing as our calling or we may find ourselves led to new and different ways of living. Ideally the meeting nurtures this process by providing a setting in which to seek God's guidance and by holding us in the Light as we seek to live as we are led.

Occasionally, a person may seek a clearness committee from the meeting to help her or him in making an important life decision: to marry or divorce, to bear a child, change jobs or career, return to school or leave school, to undertake a witness or to carry out a concern. This may be done by consulting informally with a few trusted Friends, by contacting a specific committee of the meeting (e.g., Overseers, Worship and Ministry, Peace & Social Concerns), or by asking the meeting to appoint a clearness committee. The purpose of the committee is to the individual to clearly discern God's voice.

In some few cases there is a need or desire on the part of the member to have formal recognition or support from the meeting in pursuing a specific ministry or religious service. In these cases the meeting not only must assist the member in achieving clearness about his or her leading, but also must enter into a process of discerning the meeting's appropriate role.

Sometimes a project will be proposed by a meeting committee or other group as a "meeting project" rather than a ministry of an individual. Before undertaking consideration of a proposal for a meeting project, care should be taken as to whether the project might be more appropriately regarded as a ministry to which an individual or small group are called, which should be tested in the regular process of discernment of a call to ministry.

The guidelines that follow call for a significant investment of time and care on the part of the meeting. In the best of worlds, more and more members will hear and respond to a call to ministry and seek the meeting's spiritual support. If that were to happen, there would be a risk of overextending the meeting by forming so many clearness and oversight committees that there is not energy left for the maintenance functions of the meeting. With more experience in overseeing ministries according to the structure proposed here, we may later explore other models.

The Clearness Committee

The clearness committee is a major tool of the meeting for business in discerning the strength and validity of a leading that has arisen out of the spiritual life. Using this procedure, the meeting for business can both test a leading and empower it to be carried forward.

Clearness for the meeting to support a ministry is not simple agreement or consensus. It is not enough that a proposed ministry be reasonable or a good idea. We must seek a sense of that deep, interior unity which is a sign that the members are consciously gathered together in God. When this unity is found within the meeting, the ministry is carried out with the united strength of the gathered meeting.

How to request a clearness committee

A person seeking the meeting's support for a call to ministry should write a brief letter to the meeting, in care of the clerk, requesting the appointment of a clearness committee. It should spell out the nature of the call or concern, the degree of clarity already reached, the length of time the activity is expected to last (with starting and ending dates if relevant), and the nature of the desired support or involvement of the meeting, including any financial support that may be needed.

Appointment of a clearness committee

A clearness committee of three to five persons will be appointed by the meeting for business and will report back to the meeting for business. Members of the clearness committee will be selected in the following manner:

1. The clerk of the meeting will forward a copy of the letter to the Committee on Worship and Ministry asking that committee to nominate a person to serve on the clearness committee.
2. The clerk will also refer the application to other committees of the meeting (e.g., Overseers, Peace and Social Concerns Committee) when in the judgment of the clerk the proposed ministry relates to the work of that committee. Each committee would be asked to nominate a person for the clearness committee.
3. When there are financial matters to be considered Finance Advisory Committee will be asked to nominate a member.
4. The clerk may nominate up to three additional persons, in consultation with the person seeking clearness.
5. The nominations from the clerk and the various committees will be brought to the next meeting for business for approval.

The process by which committees nominate members of clearness committees is up to the committee. The person nominated need not be a member of the committee making the nomination, but should be a person who would be aware of the concerns that committee might have in discerning the meeting's relationship to the proposed ministry.

Persons nominated for a clearness committee should have demonstrated a gift of discernment and a willingness to enter into the discipline of prayerfully seeking the leading of the Spirit.

Responsibilities of the clearness committee

The clearness committee will usually meet one to three times, or as needed to come to clarity. Service on a clearness committee is a weighty responsibility; therefore, members of the clearness committee should prepare themselves by studying the works of Friends and others on the process of clearness (see Bibliography, p. 10) and by reviewing any preparatory material supplied by the person seeking clearness.

The clearness committee has two responsibilities: assisting the individual in seeking clearness and discerning the meeting's appropriate role. Below are suggestions of issues to reflect on in seeking clearness. *Clearness, however, is not found in the correct answers to a set of questions, but in the collective sense of having discerned the leading of the Spirit.*

Clearness of the individual

The clearness committee will initially undertake to assist the person seeking clearness prayerfully to clarify God's call. The following queries may be helpful in that process:

- a. *The nature of the call:* What is its nature? How has the person come to feel that she or he is being called to this service? How does this call fit into his or her personal and spiritual life?
- b. *Potential benefits of the proposed ministry:* What are the potential benefits to the person's spiritual development? What are the potential benefits to the life of the meeting? What are the potential benefits to the wider community?
- c. *Readiness to undertake the ministry:* Is the person prepared to undertake this ministry at this time: How does it fit in to other obligations such as family, work, or community? Does the person have the skills and resources to carry out this call? What steps might be taken to become better prepared for undertaking the ministry? What are the risks and how will they be borne?
- d. *Financial readiness:* How will the person support him- or herself while carrying out this ministry? Is she or he prepared to go forward even if the level of funds available may require living on significantly reduced means?
- e. *Rightness of seeking support:* Is it appropriate to ask others to join in this ministry by providing practical or financial support? (Sometimes there may be clearness that this is something the individual is called to bear him- or herself.) Should the ministry proceed even if others do not feel called to provide support? Is the person prepared to engage prayerfully with others in the meeting without resentment and disruption of his or her relationship to the meeting community?

If the individual concludes that there is not a call to religious service or that this is not the right time to act on the call, the clearness committee would report this to the meeting for business, and, its work ended, the clearness committee would be laid down. Similarly, if there is clearness for the individual to proceed without seeking further support from the meeting, the clearness committee would report this outcome and be laid down.

Discerning the meeting's role

If the individual has become clear that she or he is called to a particular ministry and is seeking recognition or support from the meeting, the clearness committee moves on to assist the meeting in discerning our role in relationship to this ministry by preparing recommendations based on the following guidelines.

It is the meeting's responsibility to discern whether and in what ways we are led to support a ministry. Faith and Practice points out that concerns should be regarded as primarily matters of individual responsibility. *It should not be taken for granted that because an individual is called to a specific ministry that other members, or the meeting corporately, are necessarily called to involvement in that ministry.*

The following queries may be helpful in discerning the course of action that is appropriate for the meeting:

- a. Is it a concern with which the meeting can unite? Is it grounded in Friends beliefs and practices?
- b. Would it be beneficial to the person undertaking the ministry or to the ministry itself for the meeting to play a role? Would it benefit the life of the meeting to be involved with this ministry?
- c. Is the proposed action well focused on the concern? Is the method of responding to the call one in which the meeting has confidence? How would this ministry relate to others addressing this concern?
- d. Are the costs in terms of time, energy, money, and other resources reasonable? Is there a well developed budget for the ministry? Has care been taken to be thorough in predicting expenses and identifying sources of funds? Is the person prepared to bear part or all of the costs of the ministry? Is she or he prepared to live on reduced means while carrying out the ministry? Are the recipients of the service able to cover all or part of the cost of the ministry?
- e. Are there sources of spiritual, practical, and financial support outside the meeting? What would be the meeting's relationship with those sources? Are there other sources available for funding this ministry, e.g., Pemberton Fund, supporters of the activity outside Central Philadelphia Monthly Meeting, etc.? [As a general rule, solicitations to these sources should be in the name of the individual with the meeting's support rather than in the name of the meeting. A solicitation to a specific source may be made in the meeting's name at the recommendation of the clearness or oversight committee and with approval of the meeting for business. Solicitations in the name of the meeting should be signed by the clerk of the meeting.]
- f. Considering the above sources, what level of funding from the meeting does the clearness committee think is appropriate? Are the resources asked of the meeting available and/or is the concern sufficiently important to the meeting for us to dig deep to find the resources? Is the level of available funding adequate to meet at least the minimal needs of the ministry and the minister? If all of these sources total less than the anticipated need, what implication does this have for clearness to proceed?
- g. Some ministries may need or desire practical support in order to move forward. Would a working committee or committees be useful or even necessary in the right ordering of the ministry? [See the section on Working Committees, p. 8, for details on organizing such committees. If this kind of support is seen as necessary, its membership should be identified and structure organized before the ministry is found clear to proceed.]

Report of the clearness committee to the meeting

After careful reflection on the meeting's right response to the proposed ministry the clearness committee is asked to develop recommendations for the meeting's consideration. Options for the meeting's involvement might include:

* If at the end of the clearness process the individual feels clear but the meeting is not in unity on supporting the ministry, the individual should reconsider carefully. He or she may concur with the meeting's negative judgment or may seek a process of continued discernment and mutual education. If s/he feels called on to continue with the concern despite the meeting's reservations, care should be taken to avoid bitterness and division.

- Discourage the Friend from undertaking the action*
- Encourage the Friend to go forward if she or he feels clear, but recommend no active role for the meeting
- Endorse the action as one supported by the meeting with an appropriate minute from the meeting
- Provide financial support
- Adopt the project as a meeting project
- Other recommendations as the clearness committee is led.

At the conclusion of the clearness process the committee will report to the meeting for business.

The report should include:

1. Description of the call and of the request to the meeting
2. Clarity in the individual as to the nature and genuineness of the call
3. Clarity as to the timeliness of the call: is now the time for this person to undertake this ministry?
4. Recommendation to the meeting for business regarding the meeting's relationship to the ministry
5. Details regarding recommended actions of the meeting (if any):
 - a. wording of a minute, often called a minute for religious service
 - b. names of those undertaking spiritual or practical support
 - c. duration of the ministry if it is viewed as time limited; if it is not viewed as time limited, time when clearness will be reviewed
 - d. recommendation regarding financial support from the meeting: This recommendation should include any meeting support that may be required at a later time as in fines, etc., resulting from tax resistance. Recommendations for financial support should include information about other sources of financial support and the meeting's relationship to that support. It should also include a recommendation about the amount of support that should be outright grant, the amount matching member contributions, and the ratio of the match. All solicitation of funds in the meeting's name must be reviewed by the oversight committee.
 - e. criteria, if appropriate, for evaluating whether to continue the project at the end of the proposed period.
 - f. recommendation of persons for the oversight committee. (See section on oversight, p. 6).

Consideration of the Report in Meeting for Business

In considering the recommendations of a clearness committee, Friends have a particular responsibility for discernment. We are undertaking what may be a long term commitment, and in approving a ministry we are saying that we hold this ministry to be Spirit-led and responsibly carried forward. We are asking the community to receive the minister with openness because of our testimony to the right ordering of the ministry.

Clearness for the meeting to support a ministry is not simple agreement or consensus. It is not enough that a proposed ministry be reasonable or a good idea. We must seek a sense of that deep, interior unity which is a sign that the members are consciously gathered together in God. When this unity is found within the meeting, the ministry is carried out with the united strength of the gathered meeting. Reservations must be acknowledged and addressed. In doing so, all may learn and grow, and the ministry, if approved, will be more firmly grounded.

If a large investment of time or funds is required, the meeting may choose to consider the recommendations at more than one meeting for business. (See Part Three: Funding guidelines, page 8)

Some queries for individuals to keep in mind in considering support of a ministry:

1. Can I unite with supporting this ministry? Will it do a work of importance for our world? Do I see its importance to the spiritual life of the minister? Will it benefit my spiritual life or that of the meeting to support this work?
2. Do I feel called to participate in this ministry by providing spiritual, practical or financial support? If I do not feel called to support this ministry does it represent reservations about the ministry that should be raised with the meeting? Am I called elsewhere? Am I resisting God's call?

3. Am I able to support this special project, financially and practically, while continuing to fulfill my obligation to serve on meeting committees and to contribute to the meeting's budget? Is the meeting in a position to fulfill a commitment to supporting this ministry without sacrificing other important commitments?

PART TWO: OVERSIGHT AND SUPPORT OF MINISTRIES

The Oversight Committee

If the meeting takes on a role with the ministry, such as providing a minute or financial support, then an oversight committee is to be appointed. The oversight committee represents the meeting in maintaining a prayerful watch and close relationship with the ministry. The oversight committee is charged with helping the minister stay tuned to the call of the Spirit and not outrun his or her leading, continually testing the ministry for its clearness to continue, and discerning when it is time for a ministry to be laid down or to be moved from the oversight of the meeting. *It is not the role of the oversight committee to join in carrying out the ministry or developing funds or other resources.* It has been the experience of oversight committees that they are better able to carry out their discernment function if they are not responsible for the day-to-day work of the ministry. Such support tasks, when needed, are to be carried out by working committees (see below, page 8).

Appointment of an oversight committee

An oversight committee is to be established by the meeting for business at the time of the approval of the minute for religious service. Like service on a clearness committee, service on an oversight committee is a weighty responsibility and should not be undertaken lightly.

Names of those recommended for service on the oversight committee will be brought forward by the clerk of the meeting in consultation with the clearness committee and other committees as appropriate. The oversight committee may include persons who have served on the clearness committee. In some cases, such as a clear cut minute to travel in the ministry, oversight may be delegated to the Committee on Worship and Ministry.

Oversight committees will have three to five members. The members of the committee will choose their own clerk and report to the next meeting for business who has been appointed to that role.

Responsibilities of the oversight committee

In carrying out its work the oversight committee should be attentive to the following issues:

- a. *Ongoing spiritual clearness of the minister and the ministry:* Is the minister faithfully exercising his or her gifts and responding to the call? Is the ministry filled with a rich sense of the presence of God? Is the minister nurturing his or her spiritual life while carrying out this work?
- b. *Faithfulness to the meeting's minute for religious service:* Is this the work that was approved by the meeting in issuing the minute for religious service? If not, after a process of discernment on the change of direction, what action does the oversight committee recommend to the meeting?
- c. *Responsible conduct of the ministry:* Are the means of fulfilling the ministry appropriate to the call? Are the methods used focused and responsive to the minute? It is a responsibility of the oversight committee to learn about others doing similar work. Is this ministry in right relationship with others doing similar work and open to learning from and collaborating with them?
- d. *Financial accountability:* Is there a clearly expressed and adequate budget? Are funds being raised in appropriate ways, representing the work and its goals accurately, and representing the role of the meeting accurately? Is the committee satisfied that funds are being properly accounted for, that funds raised are being spent for the ministry, and that appropriate and timely reports are made to its funders?
- e. *Adequacy of support:* Though the oversight committee is not responsible for developing support for the ministry, it should take care to review with the minister the adequacy of support for the work. Are one or more working committees needed to help with practical

matters? Is adequate funding available for the ministry to go forward without harm to the minister or to his or her responsibilities to family and dependents? Are adequate structures and networks of support available for the ministry to proceed effectively? Should time be taken out from the ministry to develop support structures and obtain funding? Does inadequate support suggest that clearness to proceed be reviewed? If there are working committees, is the membership appropriate and adequate to the tasks? If not, does the minister need help in strengthening the working committee(s)?

- f. *Continuation of the ministry:* Is the call continuing or is the minister at the end of his or her leading? Has the call changed? When the ministry is at an end in its present form what are next steps for laying it down or transforming it to a new stage? Should the ministry continue under the care of the meeting or move to the care of some other oversight body? Is the ministry meeting the criteria for continuation established at the time of clearness (see section on Report of the clearness committee to the meeting #5.e.)

Specific tasks of an oversight committee

1. The oversight committee should meet with the minister on a regular basis, perhaps as frequently as monthly and no less than quarterly, to review the concerns listed above.
2. The oversight committee is expected to remain in touch with any working committees of the project in order to keep itself informed about the conduct of the ministry and to assure itself that their work is within the spirit of the minute.
3. The oversight committee is responsible for all reporting to the meeting. Reports to the meeting should be at least twice yearly and more frequently if the meeting's guidance is needed.

Interim reports should include:

- a. Keeping the meeting abreast of progress of the ministry and its spiritual vitality
- b. Any significant change in the focus or scope of the ministry and the oversight committee's recommendation for the meeting's response to the change
- c. Any requests for funds from the meeting: All requests for funds from the meeting must first be reviewed, approved, and brought to the meeting with the recommendation of the oversight committee. Before bringing forward such a recommendation the oversight committee should assure itself that the funds are needed, that it is appropriate to approach the meeting, that it is an appropriate amount to seek from the meeting in the light of other meeting commitments, that there is a proper balance between the request to the meeting and other sources of funding, and that funds will be appropriately used and accounted for. This process can be expedited by consulting with Finance Advisory Committee about availability of funds and other competing requests.
- d. Recommendations for continuation, laying down, or changing the form of the ministry: A recommendation that the minute of a ministry be changed or that the ministry be laid down may come at any time in the life of the ministry. At minimum, continuation of the ministry should be reviewed at the end of the period of the minute (usually one year). The oversight committee is expected to bring forward a recommendation regarding the meeting's continuing oversight of the ministry at least one meeting for business prior to the end of that period. *In evaluating clearness to continue, the oversight committee should be guided by the Clearness section of this document.*

The annual or final report should include:

- a. The activities carried out and any results of those activities
- b. How the ministry has contributed to the spiritual growth of the minister and of those whom she or he has served
- c. A financial report listing sources and amount of income, nature and amount of expenses, and the distribution of any surplus
- d. If the committee is recommending continuing oversight of the ministry it should review the original minute and recommend whether it be re-endorsed as it stands or be amended to accommodate changes in the ministry. It should also report at this time any recommendations for changes in the membership of the oversight committee. If the ministry is to be laid down or transferred to another oversight body, the oversight committee should establish an orderly procedure for these changes.

A note on duration of a ministry under the care of the meeting

It is not clear at the time of developing these guidelines whether there should be a limit to the length of time the meeting continues a ministry under its oversight. These guidelines provide for annual review of a ministry under the care of the meeting. It is clear that as long as a ministry is in the meeting's name or receiving meeting financial support it needs to have a living connection with the current members of the meeting. It is not sufficient to say "we have always funded this" or "we found her clear for this ministry sometime in the dimly remembered past."

Working Committees

Some ministries may be carried out within the energies and resources of the minister. Others may need or desire specific kinds of additional practical or financial support in order to move forward; in such a case appropriate working committees may be organized. Working committees may undertake such responsibilities as helping the minister with planning and arrangements, doing office work, hands-on assistance with the ministry, or fundraising.

It is the responsibility of the clearness committee to help the minister discern whether a working committee will be useful and even necessary in the right ordering of the ministry. If this kind of support is necessary, its membership should be identified and structure organized before the ministry is found clear to proceed. If need for a working committee(s) is recognized after the ministry has been approved, the oversight committee may assist the minister in organizing an appropriate committee. As discussed in the section on oversight committees, the oversight committee should not undertake the responsibilities of day-to-day support or fundraising. One member, but not more, of the oversight committee may also be a member of any working committee or committees that may be formed.

A working committee is chosen by and responsible to the minister in assisting her or him in carrying forward the work of the ministry. Its members may or may not be members of the meeting. It is not formally a structure of the meeting and does not report to the meeting.

PART THREE: FUNDING GUIDELINES

The meeting will have a budget line each year for major allocations to cover support of all special ministries and any other requests over \$1000, such as wider Quaker major funding requests, or, rarely, for causes brought by meeting committees thought to be connected to concerns of the meeting in a significant way.

All requests for funds from this line, both for special ministries and other large requests, must be preceded by a clearness process that examines the rightness of the meeting's financial participation in the project and recommends the level of financial support to the Finance Advisory Committee. Finance Advisory Committee would then report to the meeting regarding the availability of funds and regarding how this request fits in with other requests that have been received or are anticipated.

These are *guidelines*, not rules. When exceptions are needed, they may be made at the discretion of the meeting for business.

Special Ministries

Funding for work of persons with minutes for religious service may be done on a matching gift basis with the meeting matching contributions of meeting members, as an outright grant, or as a combination of grant and matching. The ratio of the match and a cap on the total amount of meeting funds is to be established when the funding is approved by meeting for business.

Solicitation of matching funds from meeting members should be done in the following manner:

- Up to two letters per project per year, at meeting expense.
- The person with the ministry or the support committee may make personal solicitations through special events or individual conversations.

Friends seeking funding for travel or projects may request funds from only one meeting source. For example, a member receiving funds from the major allocations line may not seek conference funds from Worship and Ministry for a conference related to a special ministry or receive a grant from a committee budget. Similarly, Necessitous Cases Committee should not be regarded as an additional

source for planned expenses. Necessitous Cases funding is reserved for emergency needs such as "extraordinary medical expenses, expenses in periods of financial stress, and inadequate pension to meet rising costs of retirement housing."

Major Funding Requests

When a request for a major financial contribution has been received by the meeting, a clearness committee will be appointed, in order to

- help the meeting ascertain whether the request is one with which the meeting can unite
- help discern whether and to what degree we are called to provide support to the project
- explore how this request balances with the other projects that draw on the meeting's resources for major funding.

Appointment of the clearness committee

The clearness committee should consist of three to five persons who hold a variety of opinions including one from Finance Advisory Committee, one who sees him- or herself as an advocate for the project, and one who sees her- or himself as having reservations about the project.

One member of the clearness committee will be nominated by Finance Advisory Committee. Nominations for the other members will be made by the clerk of the meeting. Committee members will be appointed by the meeting for business.

The clearness process

The members of the committee having diverse opinions enter into the clearness process in the faith that Divine guidance will lead to a united recommendation. The clearness committee will explore with those making the request any additional information needed by the meeting in order to make an informed decision.

After deliberation the clearness committee will report to the meeting for business on its sense of clarity as to:

- Should the meeting participate?
- What is the appropriate level for the meeting's participation?
- What guidelines are appropriate for meeting this request: the ratio of meeting funds and individual contributions for matching funds, maximum level of meeting contribution?

In making its report to the meeting, the clearness committee should share its process and rationale in order to help the meeting come to clearness.

Funding for capital requests from Friends Select School, Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, or others would be on a matching basis as recommended by the clearness process. Matching contributions is a way of broadening support and of identifying the level of support among meeting members. The ratio may vary with the concern. The ratio of the match and the cap on the meeting contribution would be established at the time the funding is approved. The amount agreed upon may be appropriated over a period of several years.

Respectfully submitted,
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