

Some Guidelines for Care of Friends Led to Various forms of Ministry

Under the Care of a Meeting

* Borrowed & adapted from Central Philadelphia Monthly Meeting's "Handbook for Formal Care of Friends Called to Ministry or Witness" Approved April 10, 2005, Draft Revision 2010

The Meeting's Care

From "Nurturing Faithfulness to the Leadings of the Spirit in Central Philadelphia Monthly Meeting, Approved April 10, 2005

"When the meeting has taken a Friend's faithfulness to a leading under its care, all members of the meeting are asked to hold the individual in prayer and to hold a tender interest in the work. In addition, a specific group will be appointed to act on behalf of the meeting in holding the Friend's faithfulness in prayer, offering care, asking hard questions, and holding the person accountable to the Spirit and responsible to the meeting."

A. What it means for a ministry to be under a meeting's care

From "Nurturing Faithfulness to the Leadings of the Spirit in Central Philadelphia Monthly Meeting, Approved April 10, 2005

"Supporting a Friend in response to a leading means that the meeting recognizes the Spirit at work in the minister and is prepared to provide spiritual and practical support as the minister grows in faithfulness. It does not necessarily imply that the meeting as a whole is under the weight of the concern."

The work of the Spirit in the meeting touches individuals in different ways. When the meeting takes a ministry under its care, it is recognizing the work of the Spirit in the life of one of its members and seeking to support that person in traveling a path of faithfulness. Supporting a ministry does not imply that the meeting as a whole is under the weight of the concern or even fully in unity with that individual's leading.

This [question of the meeting's support of and participation in a leading] can sometimes be a source of misunderstanding. Meeting members may be reluctant to support a minister if they

themselves don't feel called to that work. It is not necessary to be called to the work, but only to hold the member in love and prayer while she or he seeks to be faithful to a leading. On the other hand, the person with a ministry may be disappointed that the meeting is not more engaged in the work of the ministry. It is important for the person [answering a call to] ministry to understand that the meeting [may] only occasionally grows into that depth of unity (see section F on *The Meeting in Unity With a Ministry and Under the Weight of the Concern.*)

B. Spiritual Accountability

1. Responsibilities of Anchor Committees

A person whose faithfulness to a leading is under the care of the meeting may receive the care of a committee of Friends dedicated to supporting that faithfulness. This committee has been known by various names, including anchor committee, care committee, support committee, or spiritual accountability group, heretofore designated as 'anchor committee' at the recommendation of the meeting's Ministry and Counsel committee and with approval of the meeting. An anchor committee's role is to be attentive to the following issues in supporting the faithfulness of a minister:

- a. *Ongoing spiritual care 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?
- b. *The spirit in which the ministry is conducted:* Is the minister nurturing his or her spiritual life while carrying out this work? Is the ministry carried out in a spirit of teachability, humility, and respect for others? Does the minister live in a manner that reflects that s/he may be regarded as an example for others?
- c. *Practical care of the minister:* Is the minister able to care for her/his health and well being and fulfill other responsibilities while carrying out the work?
- d. *Relationship between the minister and the meeting:* Is the minister's relationship to the meeting characterized by patience, humility, perseverance, and mutual trust?
- e. *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[of religious service or support from the meeting] if there is one? Is this minister in right relationship with others doing similar work and open to learning from and collaborating with them?
- f. *Financial accountability:* If funding is being provided by the meeting or other Friends groups, 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, being spent for the purpose for which they were granted, and that appropriate and timely reports are made to the funders?

- g. *Adequacy of support:* Though the anchor committee [may] not [be] responsible for [seeking and] obtaining financial or other support for the ministry, it should take care to review with the minister the adequacy of support for the work. 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?
- h. *Companions for travel:* If the minister travels outside the meeting, would it be valuable for him/her to travel with a spiritual companion or to request an elder in the location visited? The committee should welcome reports from others who travel with the minister about ways the ministry can best be supported. (See “*Companions for Travel in the Ministry*, page 16)
- i. *Changes in the leading:* As the leading evolves over time it is the responsibility of the anchor committee to discern whether the form of the meeting’s care should also change. Is it rightly ordered for the new shape of the ministry to be under the meeting’s care? If there is a minute of religious service, should it be modified to conform to the changes? Is the call continuing or has the time come to lay down the ministry? What is the appropriate response if way is not opening for the ministry to proceed? What are next steps for laying down the ministry or transforming it to a new stage?
- j. *Ongoing care of the minister:* Is the minister ready to move to some other form of care? Should the work continue under the care of the meeting or move to the care of some other body? Has the ministry moved into a form that no longer requires a commitment of care and accountability with the meeting or other Friends body?

2. Specific tasks of Anchor Committees

- a. The anchor committee should meet with the minister on a regular basis to review the concerns listed above. *Many committees meet monthly.*
- b. The committee should remain in touch with the work. Anchor committee members might travel as companions from time to time in order to keep informed about the spirit of the ministry.
- c. The committee holds the minister in prayer, especially in periods when the minister is traveling and teaching.
- d. If the ministry requires new or additional forms of support from the meeting (financial or practical) the anchor committee would prepare a recommendation to Ministry and Counsel to report to the meeting for business.
- e. If the ministry has been receiving financial support of the meeting, it is a responsibility of the Anchoring Committee to assure that the minister is working to discover how the ministry might become independent of the meeting’s financial support, which is understood to be

time limited. The group should maintain communication between the ministry and the meeting. This can take several forms such as encouraging the minister to share experiences of the ministry through the meeting newsletter; inviting members of the meeting to accompany the minister; or, if the ministry includes teaching or witnessing, arranging opportunities for the minister to teach or witness within the meeting. Anchoring Committees are encouraged to help the minister discover rightly ordered ways to bring the ministry alive for others in the meeting.

- f. The Anchoring Committee reports to Ministry and Counsel at least once yearly and more frequently if guidance is needed.

Annual or final reports should include:

- 1) The activities carried out and any results of those activities
- 2) How the ministry has contributed to the spiritual growth of the minister and of those whom she or he has served
- 3) If applicable, a financial report listing sources and amount of income, nature and amount of expenses, and the distribution of any surplus.
- 4) Recommendations for continuing, laying down, changing the form of the ministry or changing the form of meeting's support. A recommendation that the minute be changed or that the ministry be laid down may come at any time in the life of the ministry. *In evaluating clearness to continue, the Anchoring Committee should be guided by the document on Clearness (see Clearness Process for Ministry).*

3. Membership of Anchoring Committees

A clearness committee may recommend that an Anchoring Committee be formed to work with a minister around a particular leading. The meeting's Ministry and Counsel Committee should appoint three to five Friends who have gifts in prayer and discernment to serve on an Anchoring Committee. The clearness committee may bring forward recommendations of persons to serve. One or two members of an Anchoring Committee might be persons who are not members of the meeting. Members of an Anchoring Committee are usually appointed for one year and may be reappointed if the care of the meeting is extended for another year.

C. Minutes of Religious Service

1. Overview

If the meeting approves taking the minister's faithfulness under its care, that approval will be recorded in the minutes of the meeting for business in which the action is taken. Formal minutes of religious service are generally given when a member is traveling to other meetings

or Friends organizations and when the nature of the leading is one of teaching or of organizing around a concern. The meeting's minute says to the receiving group that the meeting has tested the Friend's leading and found not only that the person is clear in a leading to this work, but also that the meeting is easy with the message the Friend is carrying and with the right ordering of the Friend's work. It calls upon other Friends to give consideration to the message the minister is carrying.

The meeting would discern and consider issuing a minute of religious service on the recommendation of the meeting's Ministry and Counsel Committee. In general, a minute of religious service is specific to a certain work and perhaps to a certain period of travel, but may include a broader statement of the qualities and gifts of the person carrying the minute.

When the travel takes the Friend outside the bounds of the yearly meeting, most yearly meeting books of *Faith and Practice* call for the minute to be endorsed by the Yearly Meeting Ministry and Counsel/Worship and Ministry Committee.

2. *Composing a minute:*

The clearness committee or Anchoring Committee, where one exists, will work with Ministry and Counsel to prepare a draft of a minute of religious service for approval by the meeting. The purpose of a minute is to affirm that the minister is not traveling on his/her own authority, but with the support of a meeting and carrying out a work the meeting recognizes as a call to ministry.

In general it includes the following elements:

- That the meeting supports the work, naming the work as explicitly as possible (in general it isn't helpful to create a wide open minute that says the meeting supports anything and everything that a minister might feel led to do);
- Name the meeting's clarity about the work, why the meeting thinks this is an important work for Friends and/or for the world;
- Affirm that the meeting believes the person really is led to do the work. (Sometimes this includes saying how the person's life and spiritual path have led him/her to this work at this time);
- Affirm that the meeting believes the person is able to do the work with reasonable skill and grace, (sometimes this includes describing the person's gifts for the work);
- Say that the work is under the care of the meeting;
- Ask the readers for their support.

Sample Minute

Dear Friends:

The following minute was adopted by _____ Friends Meeting in our meeting for business on DATE.

NAME, a member of _____ Friends Meeting, laid before the meeting a concern to BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE MINISTRY (e.g., to remind Friends of the unity of all humanity OR to provide training in non-violent direct action.) The meeting has tested this leading and found NAME clear and faithful in seeking to follow the guidance of the Spirit in this matter.

_____ Friends Meeting recognizes DESCRIBE THE IMPORTANCE OF THE WORK (e.g., that training in nonviolent direct action is an important part of extending the peace testimony in our time). NAME has carried this concern for many years, has worked in THIS WAY AND THAT. We in _____ Friends Meeting have witnessed the growth of her/his gifts and her/his faithfulness.

NAME comes to you with the blessing and support of _____ Friends Meeting. We commend our friend NAME to your care. We ask you open your hearts and listen deeply to the message s/he carries. Welcome her/him and treat her/him tenderly. We hope that her/his time among you will be an occasion of growth in the Spirit for her/him and for you.

Sincerely,
Clerk of Meeting

Queries to assist in discerning whether a formal letter or minute is indicated:

- a. Is it a work, for example among Friends, where a letter from the meeting will strengthen the work?
If yes to query “a”:

 - (1) Would the Friend feel strengthened in the work by carrying a minute?
 - (2) Is the meeting prepared to recommend this ministry to others:
 - a) Is the meeting easy with the message that is being carried?
 - b) Is the proposed action well focused on the concern? Is the method of responding to the call one in which the meeting has confidence? Does the person have the necessary gifts and skills?
 - c) Is this ministry in right relationship with others addressing this concern?
 - d) Is this ministry appropriately grounded in the care of the meeting?

3. *Requests from Other Friends Groups for Discernment and Affirmation*

When FGC, a Friend's fund, granting group or other organization inquires of the meeting whether a Friend has a true leading and the requisite gifts to undertake some work on behalf of the Religious Society, Ministry and Counsel should give attention to what is being asked by the organization seeking the meeting's testimony, consider what the meeting already knows of the Friend's work, and tailor the process accordingly. Ministry and Counsel brings a recommendation to the meeting for business for approval.

F. The Meeting Being in Unity With a Ministry and Under the Weight of the Concern

From "Nurturing Faithfulness to the Leadings of the Spirit in Central Philadelphia Monthly Meeting, Approved April 10, 2005

"Supporting a Friend in response to a leading means that the meeting recognizes the Spirit at work in the minister and is prepared to provide spiritual and practical support as the minister grows in faithfulness. It does not necessarily imply that the meeting as a whole is under the weight of the concern.

Sometimes, however, there is a feeling of unity between that person's ministry and the aspirations of the meeting when the meeting finds itself under the weight of the concern. This is not something to be "requested and approved." Rather it is something to emerge and be recognized in its time. It will likely represent a period of growing together between the ministry of the individual and the life of the meeting. And it will likely require growth and change on the part of both the meeting and the minister. It will certainly require a commitment of both the meeting and the minister to work together over time to deepen our understanding of one another and of the concern. It will require patience and care on both sides."

There is a distinction between supporting a member in ministry and feeling led corporately to join in carrying the concern with that member. Many meetings are still growing toward an understanding of what it would require of it to be corporately in such unity with a concern that the meeting joins with the minister in carrying it. Similarly, many meetings are still growing into an understanding of when this is the appropriate response of the meeting.

Perhaps the best way to answer this question of when is it appropriate for the meeting corporately to join with the minister in the carrying of the concern is to say "when the meeting is

under the weight of a concern, the meeting will recognize it.” There may be instances when there is an immediate recognition of a concern being one of the meeting as a whole. However, it is more likely that the meeting will gradually, perhaps over a period of years, come to a common understanding, clarity, and commitment.

Queries to assist in discerning whether this is a ministry that the meeting might not only support but grow to unity with:

- a. Is this concern already broadly shared in the life of the meeting?
- b. Does the minister feel a calling to work within the meeting to increase other members’ understanding and involvement with the work?

***Note** – this piece on Anchoring Committees was borrowed (and adapted) with permission from the section on “The Meeting’s Care” in Central Philadelphia Monthly Meeting’s *“Handbook for Formal Care of Friends Called to Ministry or Witness,”* approved April 10, 2005, Draft Revision 2010. Committee names were changed where appropriate to fit the wider body of Friends meetings and sections pertaining only to Central Philadelphia or Philadelphia Yearly Meeting were changed or removed.

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