

# MEETING FOR WORSHIP FOR BUSINESS

*Are your meetings for church affairs held in a spirit of worship and in dependence on the guidance of God? Remember that we do not seek a majority decision nor even consensus. As we wait patiently for divine guidance our experience is that the right way will open and we shall be led into unity.*

Advices and Queries



• Friends have given the world many new ideas and processes that spring from their experiences concerning humankind's interaction with the Divine and with one another. Meeting for Worship for Business (termed 'meeting for church affairs' by some Friends) is one example of the Quaker way at work.

• Most people make decisions largely on the basis of their own perceived best interest. Friends attempt to make a decision by seeking God's guidance. Come into the Meeting and watch what happens:

The people in the meeting room are seated and seemingly engrossed in deep thought. Latecomers, like us, move quietly to their chairs and join in the silence. Two Friends are seated at a table at the front of the room.

The Clerk of the Monthly Meeting and the Recording Clerk greet the gathering and review the agenda that has been set for the meeting. This the Clerk does while standing to speak. A member attracts the attention of the Clerk and is invited to comment, also rising to speak.

As a point is discussed the contributions are put together as a minute that summarizes and records the sense of the remarks. Those present wait quietly in worship whilst the Recording Clerk performs this duty, and then rises to read out the work.

Most often the minute will be accepted by spoken assent, whilst at times further discussion is necessary before the sense of the meeting has been gained. If the minute does not meet with general approval, for example, on account of someone's deeply felt concern, Friends may ask for a period of silent worship so that way might become clear. Friends' experience is that a greater degree of unity is attained by the silence. Should this fail, the Clerk may suggest that a committee consider the matter or that laying the item over until a later meeting might be appropriate. There is no voting, for neither unanimity nor consensus is the aim, instead, Friends open themselves to be 'led to the Truth.'

After the approval of the final minute, the Clerk asks for a closing period of silent worship. After some time the Clerk and Recording Clerk shake hands, indicating the adjournment of the Meeting.

• The basis on which Friends hold Meeting for Worship for Business is the belief that God has work for us to do. Our purpose in Meeting for Worship is to be still and hear God's word for us, while in Meeting for Worship for Business we seek to carry this out as a community of faith. The process is based on the understanding that each person can know God's will, and that God's will is one.

• A Meeting for Worship for Business is not a political gathering where each assumes they have the right to speak. Instead, one has the responsibility to lay before the Meeting whatever relevant insight one may have been given. Out of this sharing comes a greater clarity than would be reached had some refrained from contributing, or others had insisted on being heard many times.

• Friends seek to give unhurried and sympathetic consideration to all proposals. They also seek to respect an earnest and sincere minority and may postpone a decision until they have acquired more Light and a greater degree of unity.

• In assessing the sense of the Meeting, the Clerk may give greater weight to Friends who over the years have shown wisdom and sensitivity in affairs similar to those being considered. But the Meeting must guard against habitual acceptance of the words of any Friend as final and always be open to new Light. As the Meeting moves towards unity some Friends may lay aside their differences as they sense the will of God. The approved minute directs the Meeting until it is revisited, when unity on a new direction may be reached.



• Some may feel that Meeting for Worship for Business takes too much time and the approval of minutes is too slow. However, this procedure allows Friends to reach decisions quickly when there is unity, and ensures that resulting actions can move ahead in purpose. Since minutes are approved before proceeding to new matters, the gathered Meeting hears the minute and there is little time wasted in debating the wording at the next Meeting. The visions and concerns of individuals prevent the Meeting from being over-traditional and static while the insights of a gathered group prevent it from moving hastily in unconsidered enthusiasm.

• The Meeting for Worship for Business is open to members and attenders: both are encouraged to be present, though membership matters are usually considered by members.

• Friends traditionally hold Meetings for Worship for Business each month and so the local congregation is called a Monthly Meeting. Regional groupings for Friends are termed Half Yearly Meetings and the annual gathering is called the Yearly Meeting.

*Do you take part as often as you can in meetings for church affairs?*

*Are you familiar enough with our church government to contribute to its disciplined processes?*

*Do you consider difficult questions with an informed mind as well as a generous and loving spirit?*

*Are you prepared to let your insights and personal wishes take their place alongside those of others or be set aside as the meeting seeks the right way forward?*

*If you cannot attend, uphold the meeting prayerfully.*

Advices and Queries

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