

Queries on the Practice of *Discernment in the Meeting*

Below are excerpts from the articles included in this mailing and from one resource in the annotated bibliography. Each excerpt is followed by some queries that can help your meeting explore your practices and understandings around discernment. We hope you will find this a helpful tool for discussions in high school and adult First Day groups.

The excerpts and queries are not meant to be answered in one discussion session, but rather to provide opportunity for several different discussions. We ask you to discern together which one excerpt your meeting might consider at this time and share your approved responses with us. We intend to publish several responses in an upcoming issue of *FGConnections* and to publish many more responses on our website, www.fgcquaker.org.

“Put plainly, Friends, we need each other on the journey of faithfulness. The discernment of the call to use our gifts in any form of ministry helps make tangible God’s compassionate, loving presence in the world. It is the gracious and complementary work of our meetings, our spiritual communities, to name and discern our gifts, to help us test our leadings, and to help guide us in how to increase our capacity for faithfulness. Our fulfillment as individual Friends, then, begins in community-and bears fruit through the fulfillment of the world.”

— *TMP working paper on discernment*

Many times individuals in a meeting are active in social action causes, participate in marches for peace and justice or feel called to take action on critical issues because of their faith.

Query

How does your meeting provide opportunities for Friends to share their leadings with each other, for them to ask others to test with them whether they are interpreting a leading in a way that will bear good fruit and further test their discernment?

“We will be challenged at the implications of the work. The goal is not smooth passage; it is only that we may faithfully witness to God’s work as it unfolds. And the corporate discernment was one step in that unfolding.”

— *Robin Greenler article on her experience of corporate discernment*

Queries

When your meeting has been challenged to reach unity in Spirit and what practices have been helpful in that discernment? (e.g. returning to worship, threshing session, appointing a committee to bring a recommendation to the meeting)

“It is hard to give over cherished points of view that may be ego-centered or simply not be in accord with where we are being corporately led at the moment. We seldom have to choose between good and evil. When we do, for most folks the choice is clear. It’s listening for God between good and good that is so difficult for us.”

— *Patricia Loring, Listening Spirituality, Volume II, p. 162*

Consider times when the meeting in session for business had to discern between two good choices.

Query

How did the meeting respond? How does your meeting approach decisions that do not seem to be choices between good and evil?

Corporate Discernment
Friends General Conference