



# “Real Play” of a Clearness Committee

**Overview** *This activity allows a participant to bring forth a real issue and a few others to sit with him/her and experience having a clearness committee about the issue.*



60 min.



Middle School & Up



Newcomer Friendly

**Aims & Objectives** The purpose of this exercise is to allow those unfamiliar with a clearness committee to experience it.

**Materials & Set-up** Enough chairs for all participants; arrange 4 or 5 chairs in the center of the space and other chairs in a circle around them.

Before meeting together for this activities, you may suggest that all participants read this description of Clearness Committees. Your group will be “real playing” a shortened version of the process described. For groups with younger participants, be prepared to spend 10-15 minutes at the beginning of the session explaining the process of questioning and listening that happens during a clearness committee.

A week before the session, invite the focus person to spend some time thinking and praying about the question, decision, or issue they would like to explore during the clearness committee.

**Credits:** Nancy Bieber, Exercise Author.

# “Real Play” of a Clearness Committee

## Instructions:

This activity is called a “real play,” rather than a “role play,” because it is real: A “focus” person brings forth a real issue, and a few others (3 to 4) sit with him/her and have a clearness committee. Others sit in a circle around them, holding the committee in prayer and listening in silence. Because this kind of exercise should be limited in time (an hour works well), it is helpful to have a specific issue that the focus person will bring.

The exercise works best within a group where trust in sharing has already been established. One person volunteers to be the focus person; others, preferably with some experience in clearness committees, volunteer to be on the committee. (It is important that the person convening the committee be experienced.)

The convener should explain the process of asking open, gentle questions.

After the “real play” concludes, it is helpful if the convener makes clear that the clearness committee is over, and that if anyone wants to speak more with the focus person about the issue under discussion, this should happen in a private conversation. Then the group, including the clearness committee, reflects together on the experience.

### Questions to address in the post-“real play” discussion could include:

- Where did participants sense Spirit’s presence during the session?
- What insights rose in the discussion?
- How was the listening of the clearness committee expressed?
- What was it like for the observers to be listening prayerfully?

What “graces” (gifts of the Spirit) were received by all present —observers, clearness committee, focus person?

Consider the state of mind that John Woolman brought to his ministry.

In his Journal, Woolman described his preparation and inner state when he attended Philadelphia Yearly Meeting in 1758:

*“[U]nder a sense of my own infirmities and the great danger I felt of turning aside from perfect purity, my mind was often drawn to retire alone and put up my prayers to the Lord that he would be graciously pleased to strengthen me, that setting aside all views of self-interest and the friendship of this world, I might stand fully resigned to his holy will.*

*“In this Yearly Meeting several weighty matters were considered, and toward the last, that in relation to dealing with persons who purchased slaves. During the several sittings of the said meeting, my mind was frequently covered with inward prayer, and I could say with David that tears were my meat day and night [Ps. 42:3]. The case of slaveholding lay heavy upon me, nor did I find any engagement to speak directly to any other matter before the meeting. Now when this case was opened, several faithful Friends spake weightily thereto, with which I was comforted, and feeling a concern to cast in my mite, I [spoke].”*

(The Journal and Major Essays of John Woolman, Phillips P. Moulton, Editor (1989) p. 91-92.)

## Preparing Yourself for Worshipful Discernment

Develop your own practices for preparation for business meeting, committee meetings, and other group discernments. Consider writing your own queries for reflection before the business begins. Consider memorizing a passage of Scripture, a prayer, or a poem that helps you to center. You might like to recite this to yourself in business meeting when special centering is needed. Try out the practices at every opportunity, and refine them as you feel the guidance of the Spirit.

After a time of intentionally preparing yourselves for group discernment, schedule a time to meet together as a group to share your experience with these practices. Has bringing this intentionality to group discernment deepened your spiritual life?