



Sharing Stories of the Presence in our Midst

Overview

A story from Patricia McBee in which she learned, as a new clerk how to listen to the movement of Spirit in a Meeting for Business. A Friend confronted her over the style and content of her clerking and walked out. She wanted to respond in kind, but the business of Meeting kept her from reacting. “Later, I was amazed at how the Spirit had taken over the clerkship and kept me focused on what the meeting needed.”



30 min.



High School & Up



Newcomer Friendly

Aims & Objectives

When you have completed this topic, you will have experience in sharing the story of a time when you felt the presence of the Spirit in the midst in business meeting, a committee meeting, a clearness committee, or during some other group discernment.

Materials & Set-up

A copy of the McBee story to read.

Credits: Betsy Meyer, Exercise Author; “The Spirit Took Over,” by Patricia McBee, published in *Discovering God as Companion*, Mariellen Gilpin, editor (2007).

Instructions:

Patricia McBee tells this story of her experience in a business meeting when the Spirit took over. Read the story aloud; then invite Friends to share from their own experiences, responding to the attached queries.

“I had only been clerk of my meeting for a few months. I was still learning my way, and the meeting was still getting accustomed to me, each clerk having a somewhat different feel. We were discussing a matter which had become contentious over several months, beginning in the previous clerk’s tenure. The meeting had divided itself into sides – for and against.

“As clerk I suggested those who had concerns about the proposal should speak first. That way, with the concerns out on the table, the proponents could respond to them. Perhaps I would have handled it differently if I had been a more experienced clerk. Or perhaps after the meeting had come to know and trust me as clerk, they would have had greater confidence in my evenhandedness. But that is not how it was on that day.

“After listening to several people raise their concerns, one of the proponents just couldn’t listen to any more of what seemed to him to be relentlessly one-sided. He asked to be recognized; and when he spoke, he sounded very angry. I observed to him, ‘Peter, you sound angry.’ To which he responded in a loud voice, ‘You’re darned right I’m angry. I have never seen such poor and biased clerking.’ He went on for several more lines and then announced, ‘I’m not going to stay here for any more of this,’ and stomped to the door. Apparently on his way to the door he realized he didn’t want to miss anything, so as he got to the door he turned and said in an ominous tone, ‘I’ll be sitting out here, and I’ll be listening.’

“After he went out, I turned back to the meeting, and, in a centered and focused way, helped the meeting to continue speaking and listening to one another on the question. We made progress toward unity.

“As we moved on to the next item of business and a committee clerk was making a report, I had a moment in which I didn’t have to be completely focused on the pulse of the meeting. I discovered I was enraged. I was furious at Peter for having accused me of bias. I found myself resonating to his angry tone and wanting to give him piece of my mind. I even had thoughts of doing something physically violent. Then I took a breath and refocused on the report that was being presented.

“Later, I was amazed at how the Spirit had taken over the clerkship and kept me focused on what the meeting needed after Peter walked out, rather than allowing me to be overwhelmed by my emotional reaction.

“Over the years since then, Peter and I have become good friends. The matter the meeting had been discussing was gradually resolved. Over time I became a more skillful clerk. But I have never been more aware of the Spirit’s intervention than I was on that afternoon.”

“The Spirit Took Over,” by Patricia McBee, published in *Discovering God as Companion*, Mariellen Gilpin, editor (2007).



In worship sharing, consider:

Have you had an experience where you felt the presence of the Spirit in the midst in business meeting, a committee meeting, a clearness committee, or during some other group discernment? Share your story.

How did you know the Spirit was at work? What did it feel like?