

Threshing session, Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business
Gainesville Friends Meeting
Second Month 3, 2019

After a brief period of worship, Bonnie introduced the threshing session.

Bonnie and Jean will act as facilitators rather than clerks.

We can look at Meeting for Worship with a Concern for Business as a table with 3 legs:

Individual participation

Committee responsibilities

Clerk's responsibilities, before, during and after

The desire of the co clerks is for everyone to participate to the extent they wish
And to leave room for the movement of the Spirit.

Bonnie reviewed the agenda.

Ground rules, proposed by participants:

No put downs—of yourself or others

Speak from your experience

Listen to what other people say

Allow space in between statements

Stay on topic

Respect people who are not as articulate

Patience

We can add other things if we think of them, at any time.

Bonnie read the query from F&P with respect to Meeting for Worship:

Are our meetings for worship held in expectant waiting for divine guidance, with a living silence in which we feel drawn together in the Light by the presence of God? Are meetings for business held in the spirit of meetings for worship?

Walter raised the dichotomy of Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business. It is a stretch to have Meeting for Business in the spirit of Meeting for Worship.

Aaron sees that one feeds the other. Early Friends held their space for worship and from that grows all the ways we do business and live in the world. In doing business, we must constantly look to the quality of our meeting for worship. If we are getting bogged down by obstacles, we need to look to our meeting for Worship. We develop certain skills in Meeting for Worship and we apply them in Meeting for Business.

Peter agrees with both. For me, there is a specific context that comes up in Meeting for Business which illustrates the difference. Meeting for Worship is not clerked. In the process of clerking a Business meeting, things come up. There is the issue of cross talk. Someone asks a question of someone giving a report. There may need to be dialogue. There is an issue about going through the clerk—clerks need to be a little looser in order to be more efficient. Please have this discussion during the portion about clerking and what we want from the clerk.

Gary is finding a need to find patience. It's not important if we agree, everyone can speak their own truth. I read an article in FJ, where a clerk started business meeting by saying there was a long complicated agenda so we will need a long period of worship.

Sandy: when I come to Meeting for Worship I come without an agenda; very different from how I come to Meeting for Business. I have been presented with the agenda and concerns. I come with a different mindset.

Liz: Meeting for worship, we are all responsible for clerking, clerking ourselves. Clerking conscious includes clerking ourselves

Ellie: clarification of the sense in which the word Clerk is being used. Jean clarified, what does clerking mean to you. Do you see yourself having a clerking consciousness.

Helen: The understanding that I have about the role and responsibility of the clerk is someone who is continually making sure that they have their contact with spirit before anything proceeds. There are structures with the Meeting for Business to be sure that everything it held in the highest level of consciousness.

Bonnie would add that it is the responsibility of the clerk to be very aware of what is going on in the meeting. Be aware of the undercurrents in the meeting as much as possible. Bring a sense of spirit to the meeting. Hold the meeting in the light, before and during.

Gary is having a problem with the process. Jean is summarizing so that we may see things later.

Gary, we all have individual responsibilities for clerking business meeting. We don't clerk meeting for worship. We have responsibilities for Meeting for Business. Has what I want to say been said? Am I listening? Am I open to the spirit? Am I open to hearing something that I really need to share? (Sense of the meeting) Summarize: Listen, don't repeat what has been said, stay open to the spirit.

Gail: We are all ministers in Meeting for Worship. In Meeting for Worship for Business, we are still all ministers. We all have a clerk consciousness. We all prepare for Worship, and Meeting for Business as well.

Mona: there are people who do not speak. Is the clerk conscious?

Liz: It is my responsibility to speak my truth as I know it, even if it may be unpopular or a minority thought.

Bonnie distributed the queries and advices for Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business from SEYM F&P

We moved on to Committee responsibilities

Small groups had 6 minutes to decide on five responsibilities of committee.

Groups reported back:

- #1: Committees distribute the burden of discernment. Divide up the work
Two way street between committees and Meeting for Business. Giving recommendations and receiving issues for seasoning.
Having a repore/understanding among committee members; sense of community
- #2: Meeting gives committees things to season
Responsibility of committee to make decisions to be passed on to Meeting
Manage a budget
Develop committee membership; skills; getting more members; engage the committee members
- #3: Season concerns and bring before Meeting for Business
Spending money on line item budget
Be inclusive
Be open & aware of issues that effect meeting as a whole.
Nurture spirit in meeting; clerking consciousness

Bonnie: committees can write letters to the editor and sign it from the committee. Can bring it meeting to be sent from the meeting.

Committee should have a mission.

Committees send agenda items to the clerk.

Committees communicate with Nominating Committee about skills and personnel needed.

Bonnie: sending agenda items and reports. For the past few months clerks have asked for agenda items and reports in advance. That is not to say we can't add things at the last minute.

Sandy. Is working well but there are technical difficulties with sending electronic documents.

Peter: there are timing issues. When committees meet and when reports are needed. also, there is no call at the beginning of the meeting for additional agenda items. Can individuals bring something to the agenda? How do we get things on the agenda.

Aaron: conversational process; when I listen to someone try to reflect what someone said, it is helpful to have the person tell the reflector what is accurate.

Gary: Getting reports in advance from Committees is a given. We ask for additional items, but they may be referred to an appropriate committee.

Bonnie: we are no longer asking for agenda items at the beginning of the meeting. Friends can bring a concern to the clerks before the meeting for business. There is a time line for giving agenda items to the clerks.

Ellie: is there any negative value in asking for agenda items at the beginning of the meeting.

Bonnie: wants everyone to know what is coming before Business Meeting, so agenda and reports are available, printed, for everyone who doesn't have email a week in advance. There are times when there is an emergency things that needs to be considered immediately. But many things are not an emergency.

Peter: there is a chilling effect when Friends can't bring things before the meeting for business. Would there be the same effect if the concern were referred to a committee?

Sandy concurs with Peter. Number of things that come up on the agenda were small. Encourages inclusivity. Small window for stating a concern.

Aaron: remembering our individual responsibilities. Having an emphasis on having agenda items in advance supports that individual responsibility.

Gary: hears a strong sense that it would be helpful to have an opportunity to offer new agenda items.

Shawna: need opportunity to offer agenda items. Why do we read minutes from last month?

Bonnie: Every meeting I've been a member of reads and approves the minutes at the meeting where they were taken.

Shawna: We've done it in SEYM like this (reading minutes at the following meeting)

Gary: We read the specific, numbered minutes at the end of meeting. We read the narrative minutes at the beginning of the next meeting.

Jean: the things we need the most energy for need to be at the beginning of the meeting; not editing last months minutes.

We sense that we are getting tired. We have two more items. There is a sense of the meeting that we would like to schedule an additional time: these are important things that deserve our attention.

Mona wants to thank all of us.

Bonnie spoke about laying down the newsletter. She struggled with laying down the newsletter, but had to give up something.

Notes prepared by Liz Dykes, recording clerk