

# Appendix

## Conflict Transformation

A certain amount of conflict is healthy in a Meeting - ultimately, conflict ensures that the Meeting is open to new and different ideas, and that relationships are deepened through true dialogue and understanding. However, it can be a human tendency to avoid the initially unpleasant task of dealing with conflict. The following sections are intended as a guide for addressing conflict within our Meeting.

### Avoiding Conflict

We can ensure that we seek the Truth and the Light while still behaving in such a way as to avoid or pre-empt potentially damaging conflict within our Meeting. It is important to be tender - speak truth with love when you have a concern.

Some thoughts:

1. Do not spread misinformation or gossip - make sure that you have the facts correct by going to the original source if feasible.
2. Speak your own truth at the appropriate time and place.
3. Take issues to the correct committee - don't bypass committees with issues that concern them.
4. Allow people (including yourself) to express discomfort and concerns about an issue. Expressing concerns doesn't necessarily mean a person is "against" an issue, or has taken a hard and fast position. Getting all the issues and information on the table will help ensure that the Meeting makes the best decision.
5. Don't use Quaker weapons to stop the dialogue: anger/emotion, threatening (e.g., to leave the Meeting), stating that your inspiration comes from the Light (and by implication, others' doesn't).
6. Stop and think when you have a concern: believe that people are acting lovingly and with good intentions. Then think about what your motives are and be certain to express your concern at the right place and time.

**Gospel Order** (*as defined by Marty Walton in The Meeting Experience: Practicing Quakerism in Community*):

Jesus, as written in Matthew 18:15-17, would have us respond to conflict immediately and differently. If someone offends you, go directly to that person and try to settle it between the two of you. If that does not work, take a friend or two and go to that person and try again to resolve the conflict. And after at least two times of that direct an encounter, if the problem still continues, then take it to the church body.

Gospel order is **not** talking about the problem in the parking lot with people who are "on your side," saying things you did not say in the Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business. Gospel order is first of all about discerning your own truth and experience, and, if a problem exists with someone else, honoring your own truth and that of the other person by going directly to that person with the aim of finding a solution together. How respectful that is of yourself; how respectful of the other person!

LOFM asks that everyone first attempt to resolve conflicts through gospel order: that is, if you have a problem or an issue with someone, or a committee, go directly to that person or committee and attempt to resolve the problem. You may involve a neutral party to help facilitate the discussion. Do not use intermediaries to pass messages or concerns. Do not gossip. If you cannot resolve the conflict, then address the issue to the Care and Concern Committee.

Each individual has a responsibility to state his/her concerns clearly (preferably in writing) so that they can be addressed. State your concerns fairly, clearly, directly, and without an excess of emotion or ego (indeed, if you are in a highly emotional state it may be best to get some emotional distance before trying to state your concern clearly). Be clear about what you want to happen, what you are asking for. Do not blame people, or infer motivations for actions; instead, focus on behaviors and results.

Recognize the distinction between a concern of yours, and a concern of someone else's (that person would need to be the one who seeks resolution). It isn't helpful to intervene or rescue. Do not get involved in things that aren't your business or your job - redirect the concerns to the appropriate committee or person.

When someone comes to you to resolve a difference in the spirit of "Gospel Order," consider the following:

1. Maintain an open mind towards the person's concern without allowing the natural tendency towards defensiveness or self-righteousness to take over.
2. Hear the truth of the person's concern beyond the words used to express them (avoid the tendency to feel attacked or a victim merely because the concern is being raised).
3. Recognize that if you are like most people, receiving negative feedback is very uncomfortable no matter how it is presented.
4. Examine your role and responsibility in the concern - what have I done to help create this concern? What can I do to mitigate the concern? What can I learn from this?
5. If the person is very angry or irrational, you may decline to discuss the concern until the person can discuss the concern rationally. (Although recognize that any concern may be phrased in words that you may not want to hear - that is not necessarily being angry or irrational.)
6. Reach a mutual understanding of each other's reality before trying to resolve the problem. To ensure this, both of you should be able to repeat, in his/her own words, the other's concern to the other's satisfaction.

In many cases, the person will be satisfied just knowing that you have heard and truly understood the concern, and will be able to take it into account in future interactions. In most cases, the concern can be resolved to the satisfaction of both parties (once the mutual realities are understood). Often, a better solution can be found than either party would have been able to devise on their own. Work towards reaching this "win-win" situation to resolve the problem.

## **"Beyond Gospel Order"**

Everyone should first use Gospel Order to resolve conflicts or problems. If Gospel Order has not worked, the concerned person may address the concern to the committee clerk or the Care and Concern committee (as appropriate). At this point, it is most helpful if the concerned person can put his/her concerns in writing: what the problem is, and what actions are requested. Care and Concern Committee needs to make sure that Gospel Order has been followed. A Care and Concern Committee member or members may be able to help facilitate discussions or problem resolution.

The following outlines a possible process for resolving more complex problems where Gospel Order has not succeeded.

### **FACT-FINDING**

1. It is probably necessary at this point to determine what the real facts of the situation are. Once the facts are understood as best as possible, we can then move into dealing with the opinions, emotions and a resolution.
2. Often when emotions are running high, there can be fundamental misunderstandings or disagreements on the facts that need to be cleared up.
3. One possible way to gather the facts would be to have a facilitated discussion among the parties involved to identify and record the facts. The facilitator can record what is agreed upon by all parties, and on what points there are disagreements. The facilitator may even be able to help clear up some erroneous assumptions. Often the parties may find that they actually agree on most things, and that there is only a non-material disagreement. This process can help identify where the disagreements are and point to a process for resolving them.
4. If the parties are not able to participate in the joint facilitated discussion, an ad-hoc committee could be asked to look into the facts. The committee can record what the undisputable facts of the situation are, identify what the points of disagreement are and whether they are matters of fact or opinion. (Clearly any facilitator or ad-hoc committee should be composed of people without a stake in the outcome of the conflict.)
5. The outcome of this phase of the process would consist of a listing of the undisputed facts, and a catalog of the points of disagreement.

### **DEVELOPING A PLAN FOR RESOLUTION**

1. The facilitator or ad-hoc committee (not the involved parties) should develop a resolution approach based on the facts and issues uncovered in the fact-finding phase.
2. There are so many possible ways to proceed here; it is only possible to give some rough guidelines.
3. If the disagreements are identified as being non-material a facilitated meeting could be conducted between the involved parties to outline the facts of the situation. The goal of the facilitated meeting would be to understand and acknowledge everybody's concerns and ask whether the parties are able to set aside their concerns for the good of the Meeting.
4. Often, the "facts" will uncover an issue that can't be resolved by logic, but rather is purely emotional. For example, someone may be standing in the way of a

decision that is right for the Meeting because of personal hurt feelings or personal agendas. In this case, the facilitators can help the person see his/her personal stake in the issue and ask that the individual rise above it for the good of the Meeting. The facilitators also attempt to address, as appropriate, any problematic behavior or relationship problems that may have led to this conflict.

### **MEETING FOR RESOLUTION**

1. Often a person may agree to stand aside from a decision or issue, but still hold on to some resentment that s/he wasn't listened to or taken seriously. The person may continue to feel strongly that the decision is wrong for the Meeting and not be able to let it go.
2. In other cases, the person may not agree to stand aside, but the Meeting moves ahead anyway in "sense of the Meeting."
3. The issue is not necessarily the quality of the decision itself, rather the validity of the process in which the decision was reached. At issue is also whether or not the dissenters will be able to let it go - e.g., seek forgiveness, offer forgiveness, and learn from the experience.
4. A "Meeting for Resolution" can be useful. This meeting is facilitated or clerked by a non-involved third party. Each party to a dispute is allowed to express his/her hurts and concerns freely and have his/her feelings acknowledged. Everyone is also able to acknowledge, in a non-threatening way, the hurts that they have incurred through other people. Ideally, each party will acknowledge the hurts that s/he caused others, offer forgiveness to the others, and seek forgiveness for him/herself.

### **FURTHER ACTIONS**

#### **Eldering/Censure**

The meeting may need to censure certain individuals whose behavior is unacceptable and set limits on their behavior in Meeting. Normally, Care and Concern or Worship and Ministry would be responsible for "eldering." Care and Concern must decide to what extent a person will be censured and what limits will be put on their behavior. Care and Concern must also communicate these decisions appropriately to the person being censured, and also to the Meeting as necessary.

An example of unacceptable behavior would be when someone continually disrupts the Meeting for Worship. Care and Concern would meet with the individual and make him/her aware of how disruptive his/her behavior is. The committee may censure the individual by not allowing him/her to attend Meeting or participate in committees. Censure needs to occur both verbally and in writing. The individual would then be responsible for contacting the committee at a time when s/he acknowledges the destructive consequences of his/her behavior and agrees to change that behavior. Care and Concern will also inform the Meeting so no one inadvertently undermines the censure agreed upon. In most cases the Meeting will already be aware of the problem and will be relieved to know (and has a right to know) what limits have been set on the disruptive person's behavior. In some cases, Meeting may choose to "release" someone from Meeting

## Guidelines for Recording Minutes, May 24, 2010

### Scope:

The following applies not just to LOFM Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business, but also minutes from LOFM committees.

The fewer formatting features that are used, the better. Use of dots gets messy if there are changes – simple numbering or lettering is better.

### Publication of the minutes:

1. The Recording Clerk is responsible for publishing the minutes from Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business (with all attachments) in PDF format on the website.
2. The Recording Clerk must also send all the original electronic files (.doc, .xls, etc.) of the minutes and all attachments to the Records Clerk, who prepares them for the archive and for sending them to the Swarthmore College library.

### The format of the minutes needs to include:

1. Left hand margin of 1.5 inches is required by Swarthmore Library.
2. A heading with “Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business Minutes” or the committee (where appropriate), “Live Oak Friends Meeting, Houston, Texas”, and the date.
3. Page numbers are useful, but not required, for MfWAB minutes.
4. The Clerk and the Recording Clerk need to be identified by name. It can be at the beginning or at the end.
5. The minutes should mention the date of the last Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business (MfWAB) and the date of the next MfWAB (and if there are any changes in the usual scheduling, or any extra planned meetings). This allows for determination if any minutes are missing.
6. A list of Friends in attendance (first and last names)
7. Formal Minutes should be identified with the year, month, and number: **Minute 2005-02 #03** would be the third minute recorded at the February 2005 Meeting for Business. It is helpful to set the minutes apart from the rest of the text and highlight them in bold or it would be helpful to use the same format as the Minute Book, which is: no italics, Font Arial size 12, the month in two digits, the Minute title in bold with a colon:  
**Minute 2017-03 #01:** Live Oak Friends Meeting is always spelled out the first time it is used in the minute.

### What to include in the text of the minutes:

1. In addition to official "minutes," a summary of the discussion that leads up to the minute.
2. If there are attachments, mention this in the body of the minutes, and list them at the end of the document.
3. Only use names when it is important to identify someone who has been given a task or needs to be identified.

4. Friends contributing to a corporate discernment should not be identified as individuals.
5. All reports that are made from committees should be summarized in the MfWAB minutes, whether or not they are also provided as an attachment. Although it is useful for paper copies to be provided to the Recording Clerk at MfWAB, it is much more helpful to send the report electronically, preferably ahead of time. It is also very important to send an electronic copy of committee reports and approved minutes to the Records Clerk for the archive.
6. All Care and Concern membership and marriage items must be mentioned in the minutes at which they are recommended and must be recorded as minutes at the meeting where the recommendation was approved. That way there is a record of the seasoning of the decision.

**Formal Minutes required for:**

1. All membership approvals and transfers of membership. Transfers should include the names of the Meeting and its Yearly Meeting and the actual date.
2. All financial decisions.
3. All decisions that show that Meeting took a stand or made a statement on some issue or thing.
4. All changes in procedure (nominating, clerk requirements, etc.) that affect the official way we do business.
5. Changes in leadership, as in the appointment of a new clerk to a committee.
6. All these things are needed because at the Corporation's official annual meeting (3rd Sunday in March), we ratify (or are supposed to have this official meeting of the Corporation to ratify) the business of Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business for the official State-required legal records.
7. Births should include the names of the parents, siblings, and actual date.
8. Deaths should include the actual date.
9. Marriage approvals and the recording of the actual wedding are two separate minutes.

Sample Minutes:

**Minute 2005-01 #03 EXAMPLE:** As a token of our appreciation, Live Oak Friends Meeting approves the payment of \$35 each to \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ who are cleaning the meeting house. Polly Clark will present this to them.

**Minute 2005-02 #06:** Live Oak Friends Meeting warmly welcomes the transfer of member Beth Walz from Anchorage Monthly Meeting into membership effective February 27, 2005. Further, LOFM welcomes as Associate Members: Emma, Clara, and Kevin Walz.

## Glossary

**Advices** - Ideals stated as a continuing reminder of the basic faith and principles held to be essential to the life and witness of Friends.

**Attender** - One who attends and participates in Meeting activities fairly regularly but has not become a Member.

**Clearness Committee** - A committee appointed to assist a person or the meeting to clarify thinking about a decision or concern.

**Clerk** - The clerk is the person who facilitates the business and who discerns and states the sense of the Meeting. The clerk also leads and facilitates the business of a committee.

**Consensus** - (secular term) A common opinion emerging for a group's thinking together.

**Continuing Revelation** - The belief that God speaks to people directly today.

**Convener** - The member of a committee who is asked to be in charge of the committee meeting (in particular, arranging the logistics of the meeting and ensuring that all committee members are notified).

**Eldering** - Encouraging diffident or timid Friends to share their gifts with a Meeting, or discouraging and/or questioning an individual's inappropriate behavior and expression of concerns.

**Gospel Order** - The procedures for Friends business that have been found by experience to facilitate our corporate activities. Specifically, addressing concerns to the person with whom we have them. More detail in the Conflict Transformation section of Appendix.

**Leading** - An inner conviction that impels one to follow a certain course under a sense of divine guidance.

**Minding The Light** - Paying attention to the Inner Light.

**Minute** - A statement of an item of business approved by those in attendance at a given Meeting for Business.

**Minutes** - Written records of Meeting for Business or Committee Meetings to reflect the actions taken at the meeting.

**SCYM** - South Central Yearly Meeting. The regional meeting to which LOFM belongs, comprised of monthly meetings from Texas, Louisiana, Arkansas, Missouri, and Oklahoma.

**Sense of the Meeting** - A collective understanding emerging from a Meeting for Business, described and explained by the clerk in a minute for the approval of the Meeting.

**Standing Aside** - The withdrawal of an objection by a member who is not able to unite with a proposed minute which enables the Meeting to proceed.

**Threshing Session** - A meeting held to discuss a controversial issue. At such a session all points of view are heard, but no decision is made.

**Unity** - Recognition of the truth emerging from a group's corporate search and yielding to the Holy Spirit in its decision-making.