

**Adelphi Friends Meeting
Presented for first reading
on October 14, 2007**

Living Life in the Spirit: Friends' Meetings and Ministry

Foreword

This document originated in a concern that was brought to Monthly Meeting in January 1999 in the form of a letter. In the letter, the member wrote, "It is time, given the rapid turnover of attenders and even members, and given new Friends' scant acquaintance with 'release' as a historical reality, for this meeting to revisit the question of release and whether they feel they can adequately support two released Friends."

Monthly Meeting asked Pastoral Care Committee to take up this concern. After some deliberation it was agreed that the committee would join with Ministry and Worship and form an ad hoc committee to examine the concern. It was also decided that since the concern was also one shared with other Meetings, and in an attempt to be objective and in hopes of forming a clear vision, members outside of Adelphi would be invited to sit with the ad hoc committee.

The original committee was thus formed, and after just a couple of meetings it quickly realized that the original question needed to be addressed by looking at the whole question of release. Along with this came the realization that release is to be more about the individual's relationship to the Meeting rather than about their relationship to the spirit within them. The whole document thus became focused on this relationship and how Friends may seek to share their spiritual journey more publicly and formally with their meeting. The committee was given the idea that Friends needed to see release not as a symbol of prestige or status, but rather as one expression of the possible relationship between a Friend and the Meeting. Also, that all of us can share our spiritual journey with the Meeting – or chose not to – and that there is a spectrum that we can all find ourselves on somewhere. That in different ways, we are all supported and guided by our meeting...we are all to be so carried if we desire. The committee, consisting of Ruth Flower, Jamesen Goodman, and John Smallwood, then proceeded to meet every first Sunday for the next year for up to two and half hours each meeting. Throughout their work the members felt truly worshipful and had a deep sense that they were guided to the ideas contained in the developing document.

The document was completed and circulated among committees at Adelphi in the fall of 2000. Upon being presented to Monthly Meeting, it was referred to Ministry and Worship for further seasoning. After considerable effort by several people, including Sharon Stout and Jamesen Goodman, the document was finalized in the summer of 2007. The wheels of discernment grind s-l-o-w-l-y – but they do grind.

Introduction¹

From *Quaker Faith and Practice*, London Yearly Meeting:

“Live adventurously. When choices arise, do you take the way that offers the fullest opportunity for the use of your gifts in the service of God and the community?”

“Let your life speak. When decisions have to be made, are you ready to join with others in seeking clearness, asking for God's guidance and offering counsel to one another?”

“Every stage of our lives offers fresh opportunities. Responding to divine guidance, try to discern the right time to undertake or relinquish responsibilities without undue pride or guilt. Attend to what love requires of you, which may not be great busyness.”

Friends cherish the belief that Quakerism is a living faith, one that calls us to "attend to what love requires." In corporate and individual worship, we seek to lay our lives open to the Spirit of God, to wait expectantly to see what the Spirit might illuminate for us, and to act upon the guidance we receive. All of us have differing gifts. It is the task of the entire meeting to recognize and nurture those gifts given through individuals to the meeting (and to the wider society). Traditionally, meetings recognized elders who were gifted in discernment and charged them with assisting the meeting in recognizing and developing ministers among us. In different ways, we are all supported and guided by our meeting in our various ministries and on our spiritual journeys. *Putting into action the Light we experience is ministry.* Here, we offer our understanding of how we at Adelphi are led to support Friends in their ministries.

A Spectrum of Relationships

The following paragraphs describe five stages of relationship between Friends and Adelphi Friends Meeting. These relationships lie within a spectrum that includes all of us; *and each of us might take up residence at different points on this spectrum at different points in our own life's*

¹ During the time in which this document was developed, a parallel document was written and adopted by Baltimore Yearly Meeting concerning the “embrace” of Friends by the Yearly Meeting. Friends are encouraged to review that document in conjunction with this one.

journey. These descriptions are offered as guideposts to assist Friends and Adelphi in making clear choices in response to calls to work together in ministry.

I. ***Living as Active Friends.*** To worship God with all our heart, mind, and spirit requires that we develop our God-given gifts and use them. We undertake our spiritual journeys and our ministries in the context of support from our meetings. Sometimes that support is found in the meeting for worship, in the opportunity to be among a group that is openly and earnestly listening for God's guidance. Sometimes examples of other Friends who "let their lives speak" offer courage and comfort. Sometimes after-meeting conversations yield encouragement, advice, and thoughtful questions. These experiences support many of the ministries that come to us as opportunities along our life paths.

II. ***Seeking Clearness.*** Sometimes the questions are harder, the pitfalls more numerous or obscure, or the path less clear. Friends sometimes seek a clearness process to help with discernment with life questions, such as family and workplace situations. The clearness process might involve a meeting or two with an appointed committee, or it might extend for a longer period of time. In this way, the meeting supports individual Friends as they seek to live their lives in the Light.

III. ***Responding to a Calling.*** Sometimes a Friend is called to undertake specific work that embodies living life in the Spirit. In considering this individual ministry, the Friend may ask Adelphi to help discern whether it is a true calling. If Adelphi is clear that the Friend is called individually to a ministry, and that the ministry carries out the Meeting's understanding of the testimonies of the Religious Society of Friends, the meeting may offer to provide nurture for this ministry, or the Friend may request it. This nurture might include spiritual support, counsel, and continuing discernment. In this stage, the meeting is not necessarily called to join in the work of the ministry itself.

IV. ***Releasing a Friend in Joint Ministry.*** The meeting may be called to undertake a joint ministry with a Friend. At the Meeting's invitation, or a Friend's request, the Meeting may initiate a clearness process to consider the Friend's call to ministry and to discern whether the Meeting itself is called to be involved in the work. In addition to providing opportunities for clearness, discernment and spiritual support, the meeting

- Recognizes the ministry as an extension of its own work and provides a committee of support and oversight,
- Provides active practical or incidental financial support to enable the Friend to embark on a ministry, and
- Releases the Friend as necessary from certain financial and practical responsibilities for a period of time while a ministry gets underway.

Joining with a Friend in partnership, and releasing that Friend to focus on the work of the ministry, is a relationship of intense support and involvement. It is a time-limited supportive relationship between a Friend and Adelphi. Oversight includes ongoing consultation to ensure that the ministry is carried out in good order and that a Friend does not overrun his or her calling.

In offering such oversight, Meeting may or may not be called to join in the work of the ministry itself.

V. ***Joining in Corporate Ministry.*** As has happened in the past, Adelphi may take on as a corporate ministry of the Meeting as a whole concerns that arise with one or more deeply engaged individuals.² In such cases, a lengthy corporate discernment process is to be expected, in which the Meeting wrestles with whether or not God is truly asking Adelphi to undertake this work and whether the capabilities and resources of the Meeting (as well as those of individual Meeting members) are suited to the work at hand.

The process of discernment, and the planned process in which the work will be carried out, will both conform to Friends' conception of good order. In such discernment, we do not ask for assured success, but fidelity to what God is asking of us. We employ the traditional tests of accord with what God is telling us now, listening to the understandings of others as we seek unity in worship.

In considering corporate ministry, the Meeting seeks to envision a world changed by our agency – and to accept responsibility for the changes we author with God's help. There is also a need for continued reporting and testing for our continued commitment to the corporate ministry.

Relationships Involve Mutual Expectations

Along the spectrum of relationships between a Friend and Adelphi, mutual expectations change. The following paragraphs describe what might reasonably be expected of a Friend, and what reasonably might be expected of Adelphi for the stages outlined above.

I. ***Aspects of the relationship between Adelphi and Friends and attenders.*** Friends attend Meeting, read Quaker and other religious literature, attend spiritual discussions, and try to apply Friends' testimonies at home, in the workplace, and in the world. Friends contribute an appropriate share to the meeting's budget and serve the Meeting on a committee or in other roles. The Meeting welcomes Friends and attenders, provides a place and occasion for corporate worship, supports spiritual growth through adult religious education, workshops, discussion groups, and other interaction with Friends, encourages participation in Meeting activities and in those of the wider Quaker community, provides opportunities for service, brings Friends and attenders together for fellowship, and gives occasion for people to share their experiences of living Friends' testimonies in the world.

² Models of corporate ministry undertaken by Adelphi Friends Meeting in the past include the work of the Emergency Housing Committee in aiding the homeless and the creation of the Friends' Community School. In the first instance, after long service and an evolving ministry – which went from short-time stays for Friends displaced in emergencies to long-term stays for families suffering from homelessness, the meeting re-examined the need, its capabilities, and its leading and discontinued direct housing – other than ongoing participation in Safe Haven. Friends Community School grew and succeeded, and it continues to be linked to the meeting by care and concern – the linkages through the families belonging to both the meeting and the school.

II. *Aspects of the relationship between Adelphi and a Friend seeking clearness.* A Friend requests the Meeting's help in discernment. If so led, the Meeting (through the Pastoral Care Committee) appoints a clearness committee to meet with the Friend. One or more meetings with the Friend are arranged, and when the Friend and the clearness committee agree that some degree of clearness has been reached, the clearness committee is laid down.

III. *Aspects of the relationship between Adelphi and a Friend seeking clearness in responding to a calling.* When a Friend is responding to an *individual* call to ministry, as discerned in the clearness process, and seeks ongoing counsel from the Meeting while he or she responds to that call, the Friend may request:

- a. **Spiritual support**, through a small group appointed by the Meeting to meet with the Friend over some specified period of time for prayer, listening, and spiritual encouragement; and
- b. **Accountability**, through an oversight committee appointed by the Meeting for some period of time. This committee would meet as needed to support the Friend's obedience to his or her calling, faithfulness to proceeding in good order, and constancy in carrying out the discerned goals of the undertaking.

A calling might continue for a long time. While we hope and expect that meeting's spiritual resources are unlimited, the human beings who are the vessels and instruments of these resources are often stretched in many directions. Therefore, the duration of spiritual support or oversight committees should be determined at the outset.

IV *Aspects of Adelphi's Relationship with a Released Friend in Joint Ministry.* When the Meeting and a Friend discern that they are mutually called to partnership in a joint ministry, the relationship between the Meeting and the Friend changes. The Meeting and the Friend become accountable to one another in carrying out the joint ministry. When the Meeting undertakes a joint ministry with a Friend, it may release the Friend for the work in several ways:

- a. **Recognition of ministry.** Responding to a Friend's request, the Meeting may find clearness to *recognize* the Friend's ministry as an extension of its corporate ministry. The Meeting and the released Friend would continue to hold the recognized ministry in the Light, testing from time to time whether a call to partnership in joint ministry still abides with them.
- b. **Spiritual Support:** The released Friend receives ongoing spiritual support from Meeting as a whole and from the Support and Oversight Committee appointed by Meeting for the support of this joint ministry. This spiritual support anchors the Friend in his/her service work and grounds Meeting in its commitment to the joint ministry.
- c. **Practical assistance.** In a ministry that the Meeting recognizes as part of its own corporate ministry, the released Friend may wish to seek occasional practical assistance. At the Friend's request, the Meeting may find clearness to assist the person in carrying out the ministry, offering such practical help as occasional childcare, transportation, or companionship for a journey.

- d. **Financial release.** A Friend may seek to be released from certain financial and practical responsibilities in order to undertake a ministry that the Meeting recognizes as part of its own corporate ministry. This relationship requires careful discernment, not only of the mutual calling to partnership in a joint ministry, but also of the Meeting's practical ability to release the Friend from financial and practical responsibilities.

Following a careful discernment process, the Meeting may find clearness to support the Friend financially and to offer practical assistance for a period of time while the Friend embarks on the ministry.

The Adelphi and the Friend would be accountable to one another in this joint ministry. While the Friend's own expertise and judgment would direct the day-to-day work of the ministry, the Meeting would continue to meet with the Friend to discern the overall direction of the joint ministry, and to ensure that the work stays true to the calling.

If Adelphi decides to release a Friend financially in order to carry out a joint ministry, the Meeting's commitment to financial and practical support is a regular activity of the Meeting. It is the Meeting's responsibility to budget and/or to raise funds as necessary to meet the commitments made to a released Friend.

Friends have noted a possible conflict between our concerns to avoid a "hireling ministry" and our deep desire to enable Friends to respond to a spiritual calling. The practice of releasing Friends can address the latter desire without approaching the concept of a "hireling ministry" by ensuring that "release" is an expression of a partnership in joint ministry, and that it is a temporary arrangement.

When the Meeting releases a Friend to focus on a joint ministry, all are to agree on the term of release at the outset. If Adelphi is providing financial support and the Friend believes that he or she is called to continue with the work of the ministry beyond the period of release, the Friend needs to ensure that the work will be self-sustaining in the long term.

V. *Joining in Corporate Ministry.* When Adelphi decides to take on a Corporate Ministry with a designated released Friend, the Meeting for Worship for the Conduct of Business will oversee the day-to-day handling of the ministry unless it is given to a committee to do.

Finally, Friends know that meetings can't do everything. Thomas Kelly's sage advice to individuals can serve to guide Adelphi as well:

"A life becomes simplified when dominated by faithfulness to a few concerns."

Testament of Devotion, 1941 edition, page 110.

LIVING LIFE IN THE SPIRIT: Friends' Meetings and Ministry

APPENDICES

Recognition and support for the expression of a life lived in the Spirit should be available to all people in the meeting. However, some will not seek this corporate recognition and support.

Below is the process for seeking clearness and for acknowledging a called or released Friend. The person considering being a called or a released Friend should read this document before writing the initial letter.

SEEKING CLEARNESS

I & II. For those seeking clearness about their personal ministry of living their lives in the Spirit of God:

Friends might seek clearness about life questions or challenges as they try to live their life in the Spirit of God. The clearness and discernment process is an opportunity for the clearness committee to help the Friend reach clarity and to offer guidance and suggestions. The clearness committee is to be formed by the Pastoral Care Committee.

III. Clearness process for recognition of a *Friend responding to a calling*

1. The Friend writes a letter asking for a clearness committee to test the calling and sends it to the clerk of the Pastoral Care committee.

2. The Pastoral Care Committee forms a clearness committee to include a representative of the Ministry and Worship Committee and other people who have an empathy for and understanding of the calling but who are also able to ask penetrating questions and to speak truth. This group will form queries for the Friend to consider.

3. The clearness committee gives guidance by asking questions and making alternative suggestions (such as suggesting the person seek a short term experience in a similar field before making any large career changes). The committee asks penetrating questions and actively and critically listens to the responses in order to discern:

a. whether this is a true calling
b. whether the call is within the meeting's understanding of the principles and testimonies of the Society of Friends. To aid in this discernment the following questions are suggested:

- (1) Is God calling this Friend to do this?
- (2) Is there a sense that the Spirit of God is providing this Friend the means, time, and skills to respond to this calling?
- (3) Is this the right time in the Friend's life to respond to this calling?

(4) Does the content of the calling exemplify the Meeting's understanding of what Quakers stand for? Is the calling in keeping with Quaker principles and testimonies? (The clearness committee does not need to analyze and approve the practical and fiscal structure of any task or project that the individual is undertaking.)

(5) Is the Friend asking for the Meeting to provide spiritual support, counsel, future discernment? If so, what will be the frequency and duration of this support?

The clearness committee and the Friend together seek unity in responding to these and other relevant questions.

As part of this process the Friend and the committee consider what the Friend is asking from the Meeting. The Friend could be asking only for affirmation and recognition from the Meeting. The Friend could also be asking for a spiritual support committee to help him/her stay accountable to the calling. A support group should agree to meet for a specific period of time. At the end of this period the group's continuation should be considered afresh.

4. After the clearness committee meets and considers the above points with the Friend, the committee meets independently of the Friend and prepares its report and recommendations. This report is presented to the Pastoral Care Committee.

5. The Pastoral Care Committee reviews the report and recommendations. The representative from Ministry and Worship will also provide a report to the Ministry and Worship Committee for their consideration. If the Pastoral Care Committee unites with the clearness committee's recommendations that this Friend be recognized as a Friend following a call, the committee brings its recommendations to the Monthly Meeting for the Conduct of Business.

6. This report and its recommendations are considered in the Monthly Meeting for the Conduct of Business.

a. The Meeting may wish to query the thoroughness and thoughtfulness of the process the committee followed. The Meeting does not query the individual Friend.

b. The Meeting considers whether the calling is in keeping with Quaker principles and testimonies, but the Meeting is not responsible for approving the details of the project (for example, finances, viability, etc.).

c. The Meeting may then affirm the Pastoral Care Committee's recommendations, including any request for a spiritual support committee. If a support committee is formed, it will report to the Pastoral Care Committee.

d. Recognition of this calling is given and so minuted. A travel minute is given if so requested.

7. Accountability for a Friend responding to a call is understood to mean:

a. Being accountable to the call of the Spirit of God

b. Keeping in right order and form in following the call

8. If at the end of a year, the Friend wishes to continue to seek Meeting's recognition of the calling, then a clearness process is to be repeated and the minute and the travel minute reissued.

IV. Clearness procedure for the *release* of a Friend

1. The Friend writes a letter to the clerk of the appropriate Pastoral Care Committee asking for a clearness committee for the purpose of discerning a calling to ministry as a released Friend.

2. The Pastoral Care Committee sets up a clearness committee (to include a member of the Ministry and Worship Committee and a member of the Finance Committee) of people who have an empathy for and an understanding of the calling but who are also able to ask penetrating questions and to speak the truth. This group will form queries for the Friend to consider and will critically and actively listen to the person's responses.

a. This group will be listening with the intention of discerning the truth regarding two different questions:

Is God calling this Friend to do this?

Is God calling the meeting to do it as well?

b. This process may well be expected to take more than one meeting and should be deliberate and prayer-filled.

3. The clearness committee should also consider the following questions:

- a. What are the person's preliminary goals?
- b. What is the general plan to carry out this project?
- c. Is this goal and plan consistent with our faith and practices?
- d. Is this the work of who we are as a Meeting?
- e. What support is the Friend asking from the Meeting?
- f. What kinds of support are needed and what can Meeting provide?

4. After the clearness committee meets and considers the above points with the Friend, the committee meets independently of the Friend and prepares its report and recommendations. The report should include a review of the specific request for support and the length of time suggested for the release, as well as a plan for eventual self-sufficiency. This report is presented to the Pastoral Care Committee and the Ministry and Worship Committee and is shared with the Friend.

5. The two committees review the report and recommendations. The clerks will determine whether there is a need for a joint committees meeting. If there is unity that the Friend is indeed called to this ministry and the Meeting may well be called to participate in it, the Ministry and Worship Committee brings the joint recommendation to the Monthly Meeting for the conduct of business.

6. The Monthly Meeting will consider:
 - a. Whether to acknowledge and affirm this calling to be one of the individual's as well as of the meeting's.
 - b. The availability within the meeting of the support that is requested (see the **Fund Raising** section on Appendix Page 6). This matter will be referred to the Finance Committee for their consideration.
 - c. The time period for release as well as the plans for the ending of the release and/or the plan for self-sufficiency. Normally, this period is one year or less. However, a few months may be all that is asked for or truly manageable by the meeting. (See "ENDINGS" below, Appendix Page 7.)
7. To give approval to a released Friend the Meeting must be willing and able to say "we go with you and share this work with you." Thus, the released Friend's ministry is seen as a ministry of the Meeting and as such has the Meeting's full spiritual and practical support.
8. Because of the weight of this commitment there will be a first and second reading and the Meeting will consider the request at least a month before making a decision. Since the Meeting as a whole has not had a clearness process to consider its role in this joint ministry, the Meeting may wish to have some additional discussion at this time – as led by the clearness committee clerk.
9. After the second reading the Meeting discerns whether there is unity to approve the Friend's release and if it is approved, this action is minuted.
10. The Meeting will decide which Meeting committee will set up a Support and Oversight Committee for the released Friend. The released Friend may suggest some members of this committee, but the whole committee is named by the appropriate committee (identified by the Meeting in accordance to the nature of the release Friend's proposal). This committee becomes a Monthly Meeting committee and will have a term that coincides with that of the release. It is recommended that the committee include people who have some knowledge of various aspects related to the work to be accomplished by the released Friend. Also, they should be people who are comfortable giving guidance and speaking a gentle truth when needed.
11. Recommendations for the functioning of the Support and Oversight Committee include:
 - a. The committee offers spiritual support to the Released Friend on an ongoing basis.
 - b. The committee should have a clerk who calls the meetings and sets the agenda with input from the released Friend.
 - c. The committee operates with the released Friend in a relationship of mutual accountability. The group is accountable to the released Friend in maintaining a clear vision of the calling and staying true to Quaker practices. The individual is accountable to the group in that the individual listens to and considers advice and guidance. The released Friend also makes

reports on the work of the ministry. The released Friend and the committee are responsible for the good use of the money contributed to this work and for maintaining good order and practice in carrying out the calling.

d. This committee stays in touch with other relevant meeting committees on specific issues that may arise.

e. If there is an intention for this project to be continued beyond the period of release, the committee helps and encourages the released Friend design a plan for the work to become self-sustaining and self-supporting.

f. This committee reports quarterly, or as needed, to the Monthly Meeting regarding the status of the work, the plans for the development and ending of the project, and how funds are being spent..

FUND RAISING

When Adelphi releases a Friend the Meeting has taken this ministry as its own. The release of a Friend is to be seen as a Meeting activity and not an individual's activity supported by interested Friends. Therefore, the Meeting, and not the released Friend, must raise the needed money.

It is recommended that Adelphi meeting look carefully at the way the following issues are addressed:

- who should know what about the monies collected,
- whether members can earmark their contributions, and
- who receives written thanks.

Suggested procedure for raising funds

1. The clearness committee ascertains how much money is needed and produces a budget for the ministry. This initial budget is reported to the Finance Committee and included in the initial report to the Monthly Meeting for the Conduct of Business.
2. The Meeting, in keeping with the communal level of work required in having a released Friend, raises the needed funds.
 - a. The Meeting approves any necessary increase to the Meeting's budget. The funds to be raised within Meeting are included in Meeting's budget. Funds to be raised from outside Meeting would not appear in Meeting's budget.
 - b. The Meeting clerk writes a letter identifying the special financial need that this ministry entails. This letter is sent to the members and attenders of the meeting. The funds thus collected *within Adelphi Meeting* are not to be earmarked or tracked but go into the general fund. Special acknowledgments or thank you notes are not sent.
 - c. If the Meeting decides to ask other meetings to participate in this ministry another letter can be sent out from the clerk. Funds thus contributed can be earmarked for the ministry and tracked, and acknowledgments are sent out.
3. The Finance Committee collects the money and gives it to the released Friend.¹ The names of contributors and amounts donated from persons outside the Meeting are kept by the Treasurer. This information is given to the Support and Oversight Committee to acknowledge. The released Friend is not made aware of who has contributed to the ministry. In this way the relationship between the released Friend and others is not impacted or impaired.
4. The Support and Oversight Committee oversees how the money is spent. If the amount

¹ When funds go through the Monthly Meeting in this way it creates a tax liability for the person supported and the necessity to do some official paperwork. Finance Committee will spell this out, and future changes to this document will reflect those details. Finance Committee believes the released Friend would be a contractor for the Meeting. This too will be confirmed in the near future.

budgeted to come from within Meeting is not raised, Finance Committee brings a recommend budget modification after consulting with the Support and Oversight Committee. If the amount budgeted to come from outside Meeting is not raised, the Support and Oversight Committee may either ask the Clerk to send another fundraising letter or modify the budget.

ENDINGS:

“Every stage of our lives offers fresh opportunities. Responding to divine guidance, try to discern the right time to undertake or relinquish responsibilities without undue pride or guilt. Attend to what love requires of you, which may not be great busyness.”

From Quaker Faith and Practice, London Yearly Meeting

How to proceed at the end of the term of release:

1. As the end of the term of release approaches, the released Friend and the Support and Oversight Committee will look ahead and consider how to bring this relationship to a close.
2. At the appropriate time, the released Friend and the Support and Oversight Committee will recommend to Adelphi that their roles be laid down. Adelphi will minute this action and express its regard for their work. At this time, the former released Friend may consider becoming a Friend responding to a call. If this is the guidance of the Spirit of God, they will then initiate that procedure.
3. In an unusual circumstance, the committee could suggest that the term of release be extended.
 - a. The Support and Oversight Committee suggests the term of release be extended for a specific period of time.
 - b. The request for an extension is brought to the monthly meeting for the conduct of business for consideration. If approved, it may be necessary to add new committee members to the Support and Oversight Committee if current members need to be relieved. The Meeting may also need to make further changes to its budget.

Approved by Ministry and Worship Committee of Adelphi on _____