

## Guidelines for Dealing with Conflicts in Committees

### Introduction

As much as we have faith both in our Quaker process for selecting members and clerks of committees, and in each other as Friends, occasionally situations arise in which Friends called to do particular work appear to be incompatible or otherwise inappropriate to the task. When such situations arise it is important that we deal with them as tenderly as possible, being mindful of the feelings of all involved. The following guidelines, most of which we are already using, are meant as reminders of how our Quaker process can inform even the most difficult circumstances. We are reminded as we work through conflict to make room for Spirit – to look together for God’s solution.

1. When a conflict situation arises Friends are encouraged to name the problem in a timely manner. Committee members in conflict need to speak to each other, describe the difficulty they are experiencing, and ask for co-operation in sorting it out. It may be helpful if both parties approve a minute describing the conflicts and the responses to them.
1. If the Friends are willing to work on reconciliation then an attempt should be made with the help of Continuing Meeting of Ministry and Counsel. If reconciliation is not reached another minute should be prepared and approved by both parties.
1. If reconciliation was refused or has failed then the appropriate Nominating Committee should be informed by the member of CMof M&C that particular Friends may not be appropriate for re-nomination. The two minutes (or one minute) should be sent to nominating committee.
1. Nominating Committee should inform the Friends of this concern and suggest that another chance at reconciliation be attempted under the care of CMof M&C. Again a recorded minute of this attempt is advisable.
1. If the problem is not resolved then the particular Friends are informed in writing by the clerk of Nominating Committee that he/she/they will not be re-nominated for these positions at this time.
6. The Friends who may be hurt in this process should be offered further support: care both by Continuing Meeting of M and C and by their Monthly Meetings to promote their healing and growth.

No one of us has the right to be on a committee: we take positions of service to Friends, if we feel called to do so, only when the rightness of such service has been discerned by our community. Likewise none of us has the right to feel aggrieved when our community does not choose us for a particular service.

Nevertheless, Friends will feel so aggrieved on occasion. Throughout the above work, Friends should be diligent in answering that of God in each other with the greatest possible tenderness We are reminded that we all need to “let go of our commitment to opposition and separation, ... let ourselves be opened to our connectedness as human beings.” (Mary Lou Leavitt, 1986) This may be the hardest part of the process.