

Friends Discussion and Decision Making Process
Little Falls Care and Concern Committee based on the 2003
writings of Arthur Larabee, consultant and General Secretary of the
Philadelphia Yearly Meeting

The Role of Those Present:

Come prepared both intellectually and spiritually.

Be open to a spiritual process.

Support the expectations of the group for good order which may include but is not limited to:

- Starting and ending meetings promptly at the appointed time.
- Being mindful of not speaking more than is really necessary.
- Waiting to be recognized.
- Giving full attention to the work of the meeting, leaving other work and distractions behind.

Speak one's own, individual truth, and then release it to the meeting.

Listen to others, and to yourself, with the inner ear as well as the outer ear. Listen empathetically to what is really being said.

Make an effort to trust the light which is given to others; to be open to a new truth, revelation or insight; to be teachable.

Refrain from speaking if what you have to say has already been said.

Help the meeting move forward, being present with clerking consciousness.

Support the decisions made by the meeting. (Arthur Larabee, Feb 06, 2003)

Role of the clerk or discussion leader:

Facilitate the discussion.

Take care that each person is heard with equal concern.

Listen, do not take sides. If you feel a need to express an opinion, step outside the facilitator role asking someone else to facilitate while you speak your opinion.

Summarize the discussion periodically. If there seems to be a sense of the meeting, state what you are observing and ask the group to confirm that. Before the end of the meeting, summarize unfinished business and make a plan for how it will be handled.

Consensus vs. Sense of the Meeting:

Consensus is:

A secular method

Involving a rational process

Producing general agreement

The authority is the group.

Sense of the Meeting is:

A spiritual method

Involving a spiritual process

Expecting a Spirit led decision

The authority is the Spirit as discerned by the group in a spirit of worship.

In the sense of the meeting model the question is "How are we Led?"

The focus is not on an individual's preference, but rather on the individual's discernment of what is right for the group.