Meeting for Discernment: Advice for the Clerk

1. Give thought to the meeting in advance; prepare an agenda; work with those who will be presenting at the meeting to make sure you understand what will be reported or requested. Make sure you are comfortable with what others propose to do.
2. Do what is necessary and helpful to facilitate a spiritually grounded and worshipful process.
3. Start the meeting on time. Experiment with the idea that responsibility for the meeting rests with everyone, and not just you.
4. Begin with a period of open worship.
5. Review the agenda and ask for its approval.
6. Work toward an environment that is welcoming of the Spirit:
    a. Insist that people be recognized before speaking.
    b. Ask people to address you, or the meeting as a whole, and not each other.
    c. Interrupt if two or more people get into a dialogue with just themselves.
    d. Slow things down by deliberately being slow to recognize the next speaker.
    e. Ask the meeting to "settle", inviting time for reflection.
    f. Interrupt people who burden the meeting by repeating what has already been said, by speaking at too great a length, or who use a tone and language that is hurtful to others.
7. Help to bring out the full range of views on a particular matter, but keep in mind that it is not a purpose of the meeting to hear everything that could be said on a matter. Invite "minority" views before they are overwhelmed by the many.
8. Help people to stay focused on the matter at hand. Identify matters that belong elsewhere on the agenda, or in a different meeting.
9. Summarize periodically, helping to build a sense of the meeting. Check with the group each time you do this to make sure your summary is accurate.
10. Refrain from participating in the substance of any matter. Look for ways to have input at committee level.
11. Listen carefully to what is said, both with words and otherwise, so to gather the fullest possible sense of the meeting.
12. Discern when the group has come to a sense of the meeting. State your perception of it, and ask the group if your perceived sense of the meeting is shared. It is the Spirit as discerned by the group that is the final authority and not you. Don't hesitate to suggest a sense of the meeting early on if you feel one is present.
13. Sense the unity, or not, of the group and ask the group to confirm it.
14. Before the end of the meeting, summarize what may be the unfinished business, and make a plan for how it will be handled.
15. End the meeting on time with a brief period of open worship.
16. After the meeting, help make certain that the minutes were accurate.
17. Do the required follow up.