Meeting for Discernment Format

as approved by *Meeting for Discernment*

(last updated July 20, 2023)

- ***Midlothian Friends Meeting*** uses the name ***Meeting for Discernment*** for what many Quaker meetings term "Meeting for Business". Much of the meeting's information, literature, notices, and pamphlets, etc. have been changed to reflect the decision to officially change the name. The term "Meeting for Discernment" should not be changed in the future without the realization that much effort would need to be undertaken to make such a change in the meeting's written information. Further, such a future name change requires approval from ***Meeting for Discernment*.**
- The **clerk of meeting** facilitates the decisions made at our ***Meeting for Discernment*** as outlined in this documentation.
- Any Friend may provide to the **clerk of meeting** the agenda items in advance that need a decision from the entire meeting. However, informational updates that do not require a decision (including financial updates that do not require a decision) are <u>not</u> included as part of our ***Meeting for Discernment*** agenda items. Instead, these informational announcements should be either posted in the MFM web calendar or sent to the *Quaker Town Crier* (QTC) for distribution to all Friends. ***Meeting for Discernment*** is <u>not</u> intended to help or deal with personal issues/items of Friends; rather, should these arise during ***Meeting for Discernment***, they should be referred immediately to: a Care Coordinator, ad-hoc committee, or a Clearness Committee.
- The **clerk of meeting** initiates the creation of agenda items for ***Meeting for Discernment*** by reminding Friends via a verbal announcement to sent to the clerk of meeting any agenda items they might have.
- The **clerk of meeting** will gather all the agenda items and process them, order them, and resolve any questions or concerns before they are published on the web calendar for all Friends to view.
- The **clerk of meeting** creates the final list of agenda items up to the start of ***Meeting for Discernment***.
- Recording minutes at ***Midlothian Friends Meeting*** is easy for the **Recording Clerk** because only decisions made during our once-a-month ***Meeting for Discernment*** are recorded by the **Recording Clerk**. There are usually only between zero to four decisions made during a typical ***Meeting for Discernment***, each decision consisting of just one or two sentences. None of the discussion that leads up to a decision is recorded; only the agreed-upon decision is recorded after:
  - the discernment process (discussion) for an agenda item has ended,
  - the 'clerk of meeting' has verbally summarized the decision, and
  - Friends present have united with the clerk of meeting's verbal summary.

  Each written minute is jointly approved by those present right after the minute is written and read by the **Recording Clerk** to the entire meeting in order to ensure the wording of the minute is correct.
  This simplified process makes this volunteer position conducive for someone who has limited time to help our meeting, but is able to make a brief once a month commitment.

  *<u>NOTE</u>: The above process of recording minutes was approved at **Meeting for Discernment**; and therefore, should not be changed without approval by **Meeting for Discernment**.*

- All minutes created at ***Meeting for Discernment*** by the **Recording clerk** and approved at that ***Meeting for Discernment*** should not be altered at a later time even if there are second thoughts. Needed alterations should be brought to a future ***Meeting for Discernment*** for consideration and approval.
- Since ***Meeting for Discernment*** is a form of Quaker worship, announcements should not be made until ***Meeting for Discernment*** has been ended by the **clerk of meeting** with the customary handshake. Announcements should never be sent to the **clerk of meeting** in advance as though they are agenda items. It is best to handle lengthy announcements by sending them to all Friends via the *Quaker Town Crier*.