

Living our Faith: Giving Life to our Minutes

The General Secretary has conceptualized a Foundational Minute and an adoption process:

Our General Secretary has described a clear process for adopting a “foundational minute.” Which he defines as: “...a broad and comprehensive statement of concern, on a significant matter, reflecting something that the Yearly Meeting cared about. It would be widely seasoned within the Yearly Meeting. All members would have an opportunity for input. The minute, when adopted, could then be the basis for subsequent action by the Yearly Meeting, Interim Meeting, standing committees and staff.”

1. A quarterly meeting, or a PYM committee, brings a significant concern to Interim Meeting and asks Interim Meeting to authorize the preparation of a Foundational Minute.
2. If approved, a task group is formed to prepare such a minute. The task group would include those who brought the concern as well as others who might be added by reason of their experience, expertise or interest.
3. The Foundational Minute would include the following:
 - a. A comprehensive statement of the concern
 - b. A history of the concern and what has been done to date within the Yearly Meeting
 - c. The spiritual foundation for the concern, rooted in Quaker faith and practice, answering why Friends should be involved
 - d. Options for addressing the concern
 - e. Specific proposals
 - f. A request for Yearly Meeting action and support
4. The Foundational minute comes back to Interim Meeting to be further seasoned and the question answered: “Is this minute ready to go to Yearly Meeting?”
5. If Interim Meeting judges that the minute is ready to go to Yearly Meeting in annual sessions, it is placed on the agenda of our next annual meeting.
6. If Yearly Meeting discerns that the Foundational Minute is satisfactory, it would approve sending the minute out to all monthly and quarterly meetings for discernment and seasoning. Comments and concerns would be directed to the task group which would consider them for possible incorporation in the “final minute.”
7. Following seasoning and discernment, the Foundational Minute would come back to the Yearly Meeting at its next annual meeting for final action.

To Arthur Larrabee’s list I would add the creation of a searchable database of PYM minutes, available to monthly meetings and that there be documentation available describing the scope of the seasoning.

Some questions:

1. What are the substantive issues of our time? A couple substantive issues from the past were slavery and nuclear disarmament. What would be a **critical** substantive issue to consider for the next six months or year?
2. Would we have a hierarchy of minutes, the substantive and a lesser more immediate form? If yes how would lesser minutes be handled?
3. Should we have a seasoning body, responsible for making certain the minute is clear and for distributing it to all monthly meetings for discernment and comment? Ought we have a deadline such a sometime before sessions? Would this body also determine which minutes were significant?
4. What about urgent world issues such as the current continuing violence in Gaza? Can we make timely interpretations of our testimonies, in order to make public statements about war, as we did after 9/11?
5. Do we need to always make a statement or take action as a unified body or do we sometimes want to leave it to the passionate few who are lead to act?

For questions about this report, please contact:

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