

Philadelphia Yearly Meeting - Faith & Practice Revision Group

Proposed Section: “II.A. Faith Reflected in our Daily Lives”

1 II. FAITH REFLECTED IN PRACTICE

2 *Bring the whole of your life under the healing and ordering of the Holy Spirit,*
3 *remembering that there is no time but this present. Friends are reminded that we are*
4 *called, as followers of Christ, to help establish the Kingdom of God on earth.*

5 **Advices, IV**

6

7 **A. Faith as Reflected in our Daily Lives**

8

9 **I. Introduction: Concerns, Leadings and Testimonies**

10 Friends are sometimes called “practical mystics” because worship has been the wellspring for
11 our service in the community and world.

12 Concerns and Leadings

13

14 The impetus for service is often a concern, which, as Friends use the word, is a quickening sense
15 of the need to do something or to demonstrate sympathetic interest in an individual or group,
16 as a result of what is felt to be a direct intimation of God’s will and our belief that the beloved
17 community can be realized here and now.

18

19 Initially, a concern may not be linked to any specific action, but is simply a troubled sense that
20 something is awry. When the concern gains clarity and focus, Friends refer to it as a leading.
21 This involves a sense of being drawn or called by God in a particular direction or toward a
22 particular course of action. The leading may be short-term, or it may involve an ongoing
23 transformation of one’s life and the life of the meeting.

24

25 Friends have long believed that leadings be tested before action is taken. The process of testing
26 is a form of spiritual discipline for both the Friend with a leading and the meeting community.
27 When a member brings a leading to the attention of the meeting, it may respond in several
28 ways:

29

30 1. The meeting may appoint a clearness committee to help the member gain greater
31 clarity regarding the leading; the clearness committee may also provide longer-term
32 support, including ongoing testing and re-evaluation.

33 2. The meeting may approve the leading and the proposed course of action it entails,
34 which may result in releasing the member to follow the leadings, with the meeting
35 taking responsibility for providing financial assistance and family support, and

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36 continuing to give oversight until the leading is fulfilled. It may also prepare a Minute of
37 Concern in which the member’s leading is endorsed, and then bring this Minute to the
38 quarterly meeting and to yearly meeting.

39 3. The meeting may fail to unite with the member’s leading, in which case either the
40 member and meeting agree that it is inadvisable to pursue the leading further or the
41 member may decide to continue to pursue the leading without the explicit support of
42 the meeting.

43
44 4. If the member continues to feel led, but the meeting is unable to approve the course of
45 action entailed by the leading, the meeting may form a small group, including Friends
46 who have expressed a diversity of perspectives, to continue the process of discernment
47 with the member. This may result in bringing a modified proposal for action for
48 consideration by the meeting; and this process may continue until either unity is
49 reached to support the leading or to lay it down.

50
51 Submitting the leading to the judgment of the meeting is of value to the meeting as well as to
52 the member. The meeting may be enlightened by the insights of those who bring their leadings
53 to the attention of the meeting, and these Friends may be helped, through the sympathetic
54 consideration of the meeting, to clarify their leadings.

55
56 Testimonies

57
58 For more than three hundred years, Friends have adopted practices that reflect deeply held,
59 historically rooted attitudes and modes of living in the world. Friends refer to these practices as
60 testimonies. The testimonies are expressions of lives turned toward the Light, outward
61 expressions that reflect the inward experience of divine leading. Often in the past the
62 testimonies were defined specifically, such as the testimony against taking oaths; recently it
63 has become customary to speak of them more generally, as in the testimonies of simplicity,
64 peace, integrity, community, equality and stewardship (hence the acronym, SPICES, used by
65 some meetings, first day schools, and Friends schools).

66
67 Throughout our history Friends have testified that our lives are not meant to conform to the
68 ways of the world, but that we are meant to live in obedience to the Light of Truth within, and
69 through this witness to contribute to the transformation of the world through the Light of
70 Truth.

71
72 **II. The Community**

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74 Discernment, Clearness and Decision Making

75 Friends’ theological foundations lead to distinctive processes for taking action as a group and as
76 individuals. These processes, intimately related to one another as they spring from the same
77 source, are discernment, clearness, and decision-making.

78 Discernment

79 Discernment as Friends understand it is the act of finding way forward in search for truth, with
80 openness to the Light beyond the self. The act of choosing reveals fundamental values and
81 deepest loyalties. Friends have faith that for any question there is a way forward for those who
82 seek it. The act of seeking God’s guidance is assisted with the help of the community, to assure
83 that what is sensed by one is tested and affirmed by the wider worshipping community.

84 Friends use discernment processes to seek unity about meeting matters, to find way forward
85 for personal leadings, and to test a corporate leading to act as a community of concern.

86 Clearness for a Meeting

87 When a meeting is asked, for example, to take a marriage under its care, or when an attender
88 requests membership, the meeting takes up the dual responsibilities of learning if there are
89 other commitments involved for those making such requests and of discerning if the request
90 can be accepted by the meeting. Such clearness is specific to the needs of a marriage or
91 membership. (See p. xx for additional information about Marriage and p. xx about
92 Membership).

93 Clearness for an Individual

94 Personal clearness is a process some individuals find helpful to determine whether to
95 undertake a proposed action or to change direction in their lives. This process can be initiated
96 by the person who requests clearness or entrusted to the meeting, and usually to its pastoral
97 care committee. Within the context of worship, the members of the clearness committee listen
98 deeply to the person seeking clearness and offer queries, not advice, to assist the person
99 explore the issues that are presented and to discover the way forward. (See p. xx for additional
100 information and Tools for Discernment).

101 Decision-Making

102 The goal of Friends' decision-making is a Spirit-led sense of the meeting—that is, clarity on the
103 topic under consideration and on how to address it reached through a Spirit-led process. Even
104 in the face of strong differences of opinion, that goal is achievable when all members submit to

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105 God’s empowering love and are gathered into unity. Friends' decision-making is rooted in the
106 shared understanding that God is present and accessible in the process of considering all
107 matters and that the decision will be made with the help of divine assistance.

108
109 While the process is democratic in the sense that Friends present are encouraged to
110 participate, it goes beyond democracy in its expectation that participants set aside their
111 personal convictions in order to be led by a Guide beyond the self. It can be deeply satisfying
112 for those participating in Friends decision-making when the needs and aspirations of the
113 beloved community take precedence over individual preferences. The decisions that result are
114 then in harmony with Spirit.

115 Corporate discernment

116 Meetings for business with attention to business are thus conducted in the same openness to
117 the leading of the Spirit as are meetings for worship. Our religious communities thrive when
118 we nurture our love for one another, work to achieve spiritual unity, and live in harmony with
119 the Spirit. As we wrestle with outward issues, the Inward Light gives us new perspectives and
120 creative responses. On all matters, even the mundane, the presence of the Inward Light
121 promises a fresh revelation of truth and a clearer understanding of God's beloved community.

122 A discipline of deep listening supports the unfolding of the sense of unity, as facts and feelings
123 are sorted through. Being attentive to the Light Within grounds the discernment beyond those
124 facts and feelings so that members grow in unity of spirit. As we hold all participants in a spirit
125 of love, we bring a sense of humility in which the Divine Spirit grows. As matters are
126 considered, Friends seek Divine assistance to guide our discernment, with prayerful attention to
127 what is offered, knowing that new openings to truth and new insight can come through anyone
128 present.

129
130 We see a difference between sense of the meeting and consensus. Consensus is a widely used
131 and valuable *secular* process characterized by a search for general agreement largely through
132 rational discussion and compromise. Sense of the meeting is the outcome of a *spiritual* process
133 characterized by deep listening to each other and trusting in God’s guidance. Both processes
134 result in a course of action agreed to by all of the participants, but the sense of the meeting
135 relies consciously on the Spirit. Although reasoned argument and lively debate may play a role
136 in Friends' decision-making, they are secondary to spiritual insight and leading.

137
138 Our search is for unity, not unanimity. We consider ourselves to be in unity when our search for
139 Truth is shared; when our listening for God is faithful; when our wills are submitted to the
140 presence of Christ; and when our love for one another is constant. A united meeting is not
141 necessarily all of one mind, but it is all of one heart. When the sense of the meeting has been

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142 rightly discerned, those present will know that they have faithfully followed their Guide, and
143 will feel a continued affection for each other.

144
145 The meeting records the sense of the meeting –the decision – in a minute which is read back
146 and approved by the body. Once approved, the clerk works with the recording clerk and others
147 as needed to assure the next steps for the implementation. There is value in approving
148 implementation steps at the same session in which the decision is reached. No action is taken
149 on an issue on the meeting's behalf in anticipation of the minute's approval.

150 Expectations of Participants

151 Among Friends, the decisions made by a group are enriched when all members commit
152 themselves to regular attendance at meetings for worship as well as at decision-making
153 sessions. By maintaining a spirit of worship throughout the meeting, participants nurture their
154 openness to the leadings of the Spirit and its gifts of trust, humility, compassion, and courage.
155 Anyone's absence means that the wisdom such a participant brings is unavailable to the
156 process. Thus all Friends are encouraged to attend meetings for worship with attention to
157 business.

158 Although an individual Friend has the designated role of clerk, all present share the
159 responsibility for the maintenance of a Spirit-led gathering, for the wise use of time, and for a
160 steadfast search for Truth. All are expected to be attentive and to offer insights that arise from
161 reflective worship even if those insights are counter to the perceived direction of the
162 consideration.

163
164 Worship also contributes to care for speaking and listening. The sense of worship helps each
165 participant be attentive to any nudge discerned to be shared when speaking. Listening is
166 marked by respect for others, with speakers saying only what they know to be worth others'
167 hearing, and with listeners seeking the Light as it is revealed through others. An openness of
168 spirit enables Friends to hear and incorporate differing, and sometimes, contradictory views.

169
170 Friends generally welcome the participation of serious and consistent attenders who are not
171 members of the meeting. At times, meetings may advise non-members to show sensitive
172 restraint when addressing meeting affairs. In rare circumstances it may be necessary for a
173 decision to be reached only by the members of the meeting. In this case, nonmembers may be
174 asked to hold the meeting in the Light during the discernment.

175 The Good Order Used Among Us

176 Thoughtful preparation frees the meeting to follow the leadings of the Spirit, preventing
177 frustration arising from poor arrangements, incomplete information, or unclear procedures.

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- 178 • The clerks or other designated persons prepare the agenda and, if appropriate,
179 distribute the agenda and other essential information in advance. Those expected to
180 bring matters before the meeting prepare and share the material in advance whenever
181 possible.

- 182 • It is helpful for issues to be well seasoned before bringing to the meeting for action. The
183 matter may benefit from additional research, background information, or review by a
184 committee within the meeting. In the case of an individual bringing a matter forward, it
185 may be useful to meet with a clearness committee to further explore and test the
186 matter.

- 187 • Friends prepare themselves by reading the advance material and preparing their hearts
188 and minds for the worshipful process. Friends can help deepen the session by holding
189 the session itself in worship.

- 190 • Arrangements are made for the time and place of gathering, child care, meals,
191 hospitality and other organizational matters to permit as many as possible to attend and
192 to provide ample opportunity for the unhurried disposition of business.

- 193 • Members who are prompt in arrival and disciplined in settling into worship contribute
194 much to the depth and power of the meeting. It is also important that this time of
195 settling and focusing not become a brief formality.

- 196 • Where a presiding or recording clerk has not already been appointed or is unable to
197 serve, the meeting agrees how to proceed, often by naming someone to lead the
198 session.

- 199 • Decision-making by sense of the meeting applies to easy issues as well as to difficult
200 ones. Care should be taken to assess before the meeting where the best attention is
201 needed, and what items may be held over to a future session if necessary.

- 202 • The promptings of the Inward Teacher may come with power to anyone present,
203 without respect to age or experience. Friends know the importance of those whose
204 experience and advice in similar matters have been helpful in the past; Friends also
205 understand that sensitive and powerful insights come through newer and younger
206 participants as well.

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207 The Meeting in Conflict

208 Friends often find themselves most challenged when matters before them call forth strongly
209 held but incompatible responses. When any member present feels so strongly led as to wish to
210 prevent the meeting from acting, it is important that the meeting take the time to test this
211 leading in a loving spirit, and examine responsibly the consequences if the action is not taken.

212 Within any meeting for worship with attention to business, there will be times when the clerk
213 or another may call for active worship to settle Friends’ energy. A meeting that is concerned to
214 maintain loving unity will be ready to take the time needed to listen, deeply discern, and to pay
215 attention to the member who is led to present a concern.

216 The search for the course of action that will keep the meeting in unity—or the resolution of the
217 problems caused by disunity itself—rests with all in the meeting: the individual or group in
218 opposition as well as the other members.

219 Questions for a Meeting in Conflict

220 When disagreement on an issue threatens to divide a meeting, it may be helpful for the
221 meeting and each Friend to consider the following questions:

- 222 • Have all Friends taken care to fully examine, in a loving and prayerful spirit, the
223 perspective of those with whom they disagree?
- 224 • Have all Friends truly tried to leave behind their personal desires so to be led by the
225 Spirit?
- 226 • Do all Friends seek to discern God’s workings in all viewpoints?
- 227 • Have Friends considered whether God’s will for them as individuals may differ from
228 God’s will for the meeting?
- 229 • Do those in conflict regularly reaffirm, in voice and attitude, the love they feel for one
230 another?
- 231 • If Friends have NOT yet done the work to listen and affirm, what will support them to do
232 this?

233 Moving Forward in Unity

234 In situations of conflicting insights, Friends have found helpful several ways of moving forward
235 in unity:

- 236 • The meeting may move to a deeper spiritual searching and sharing, in the spirit of
237 waiting worship. Every conviction is examined in the Light as Friends wait together to
238 discern whether their convictions stem from a genuine motion of the Spirit. This allows all
239 to examine what may need to be laid aside, and to test the authenticity of the leadings,
240 even if contrary to the weight of the meeting.

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- 241 • The meeting may reschedule the matter for another time, encouraging members in the
242 interim to continue their search for the right action, whether in solitary prayer and
243 meditation, or in small informal groups.
- 244 • Sometimes a meeting may wait or proceed with other business while a small
245 representative ad hoc committee withdraws to draft a minute or other course of action
246 with the hope and expectation that the resulting minute will lead to unity.
- 247 • After patient searching over a considerable period, the meeting may conclude that the
248 sense of the meeting is clear and unity in the Spirit can be maintained if that sense is
249 translated into action, but acknowledge that a few Friends continue to have reservations
250 about the substance of the proposed action.

251 Friends who have objected may feel led to withdraw their objections, being unwilling to stand
252 in the way of the meeting. Or those Friends may feel released from the burden of their concern,
253 having laid it on the conscience of the meeting. Or they may stand aside while maintaining their
254 objections, asking that their names and the grounds of their objections be recorded in the
255 minutes of the meeting, while the decision goes forward.

256 Friends who stand aside are affirming their continued spiritual unity with the meeting. That
257 unity requires those Friends to accept with good grace the decision’s consequences for the
258 meeting and for them. That same spiritual unity requires the rest of the meeting to keep the
259 objections firmly in mind as they proceed and to treat tenderly and with a loving heart those
260 who disagreed with the decision.

261 Each of these avenues expresses trust in divine guidance and a commitment to remaining in
262 unity in the Spirit.

263

264 From time to time issues arise that cause a meeting to labor over a protracted period with
265 someone who continues to stand outside the unity of the meeting. When the meeting senses
266 that the person objecting is not in or responding to the spiritual unity of the community, the
267 meeting may move forward despite the risk of alienating that individual. Even if the meeting
268 acts with love and does not intend to cut the member off, the member will often feel an
269 irreparable break with the meeting.

270 **Friends and Education**

271 Since its beginnings, the Religious Society of Friends has emphasized the importance of
272 education for its members and for society generally. Friends believe that education is especially
273 beneficial if it instills a concern for others and strengthens a commitment to live faithfully.

274 For guidance in word and deed, we look first to the Spirit. We recognize that education in itself
275 does not necessarily lead to a deeper spiritual sensitivity. Many who bring pure water from the
276 spiritual springs of life may lack extensive formal education. But we also know from experience

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277 that a sound education helps us identify what is faithful to the Light in our own leadings,
278 interpret and communicate those leadings, and weigh the leadings of others.

279 Friends regard spiritual growth as essential. Such growth occurs when our receptivity to the
280 Inner Teacher is nurtured by participation in meeting for worship, by studying sacred texts and
281 other literature, and by the inspiration of exemplary lives. Although Friends emphasize spiritual
282 formation, we do not neglect the acquisition of intellectual, aesthetic, and practical skills and
283 understanding. Whether within the family, the monthly meeting, or the various levels of
284 education, Friends are committed to balancing heart, mind, and hand in spiritual wholeness.

285 Friends who are called to careers in education of every kind and at every level, public and
286 private, see this service as a form of witness.

287 Religious Education in Monthly Meetings

288 Monthly meetings have a special responsibility to bring children and adults under their care
289 into full participation in the life of the meeting and into an understanding of the history, faith,
290 and practices of the Religious Society of Friends. The cornerstone of religious education for
291 most monthly meetings is an active First Day School program for children, youth, and adults
292 that complements their experience in meeting for worship. Such education can include special
293 study groups, worship sharing opportunities, and service projects, as well as regular classes
294 before or after meeting for worship. An accessible meeting library is useful to support the
295 religious education program. These efforts will succeed only if meeting members, including
296 those with years of experience among Friends, actively participate.

297 Meetings actively welcome every opportunity to nurture the spiritual growth of their members
298 and attenders, whether within the meeting or elsewhere. Meetings may be called upon in
299 different ways to offer support for such opportunities within the limitations of their spiritual,
300 personal and financial resources. For instance, a meeting may be asked to support individuals
301 who are involved in continuing education, whether at a weekend conference or for a term at a
302 Quaker study center.

303 Friends and Public Education

304 Friends have a responsibility, as do all citizens, to be informed, concerned, and active
305 supporters of the public educational system. Whether as parents, teachers, administrators,
306 school board members, consultants, or taxpayers, Friends can make an important witness to
307 the quality of life and public engagement in our communities.

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309 Friends are also expected to give informed, active support to those Quaker children who attend
310 public schools and to those Friends who devote themselves as teachers and administrators in
311 the public educational system at whatever level. Such support is of particular importance to
312 those children and adults who, through their commitment to Truth and through the quality of
313 their relationships, seek to maintain a Quaker witness in situations where others may not share
314 our testimonies.

315 Friends Schools and Colleges

316 Friends meetings have founded a substantial number of educational institutions in the
317 Philadelphia Yearly Meeting area. These include three colleges, a study/retreat center, and
318 some 40 schools. These institutions seek to provide a kind of community life and experience
319 that is founded upon and guided by Friends' principles. Though they were originally established
320 to educate Friends' children, they now serve more non-Friends than Friends.

321

322 A meeting may be asked to assist individuals who seek financial and other practical support in
323 order to attend a Friends school or a college/university. It may be asked to help special needs
324 children attend a Friends school established to serve those with learning differences.
325 Occasionally, it may be asked to provide oversight for families that choose to instruct their
326 children at home. A meeting may consider the challenge of forming and sustaining its own
327 Friends school, should the children of its members and attenders not have access to an existing
328 Friends school.

329 Ideally, a Friends school or college seeks to create an intentional community and prepare its
330 participants for engagement in the work of the world. A Friends educational institution is more
331 likely to fulfill its mission of incorporating spiritual values throughout its programs if there is a
332 solid core of students, parents, and graduates who understand and actively support Quaker
333 principles and practices. The effectiveness of a Quaker witness in our schools and colleges
334 especially depends upon the spiritual depth and commitment of the members of the governing
335 body, the administrators, and the staff. That commitment requires careful attention to all
336 aspects of the functioning of the school with primary focus on the student's welfare and proper
337 education. But also important are the processes and structures of governance and the
338 prevention of any form of discrimination or disempowerment based on age, gender, race,
339 sexual orientation, economic status or religion.

340 Those who have experienced Friends' concern for simplicity, equality, justice, and compassion
341 in our educational institutions often have a significant and positive influence in their wider
342 communities. Because these institutions embody our ways of worship, our social testimonies,

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343 and our commitment to service, they are an important form of outreach to the wider world.
344 Consequently Friends, as individuals and as meetings, have a special responsibility to support
345 Friends educational institutions.

346 Friends schools and colleges today seek to include students and staff from widely varied
347 economic and ethnic backgrounds. Such increasing diversity in our educational communities
348 can both challenge and strengthen them. Bringing different traditions, experiences, and
349 perspectives together in a common search for truth requires time, thought, and a genuine
350 willingness to change, but offers the rewards of deeper understanding and a vital and inclusive
351 community.

352 Peacemaking

353 Since all human beings are children of God, Friends are called to love and respect all persons
354 and to overcome evil with good. Our words and lives stand as a positive witness in a world torn
355 by strife and violence.

356 The Religious Society of Friends has consistently held that war is contrary to the Spirit of Christ,
357 as stated in our Declaration to Charles II in 1661:

358 *We utterly deny all outward wars and strife, and fightings with outward weapons, for*
359 *any end, or under any pretense whatsoever; this is our testimony to the whole*
360 *world...The Spirit of Christ, by which we are guided, is not changeable, so as once to*
361 *command us from a thing as evil, and again to move us unto it; and we certainly know,*
362 *and testify to the world, that the Spirit of Christ, which leads us into all truth, will never*
363 *move us to fight and war against any man with outward weapons, neither for the*
364 *Kingdom of Christ nor for the Kingdoms of this world...Therefore, we cannot learn war*
365 *any more.*

366 This historic testimony must also be a living testimony as we work to give concrete expression
367 to our ideals often in opposition to prevailing opinion. The peace testimony is closely linked to
368 the basic Friends commitment to honor that of God in every person, and therefore to avoid not
369 only physical violence but also more subtle forms including psychological, economic, or
370 systemic. At the same time, we acknowledge that conflict can be an opportunity to engage
371 lovingly those with whom we disagree. That love can often be expressed in creative, nonviolent
372 resolution of the disagreement. When we encounter people whose views are profoundly
373 different from our own, that love can also be manifested by affirming the sincerity with which
374 they hold those views, while forthrightly expressing our own convictions.

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375 As we reflect further on the sources of violence and war, we may be led to consider seriously
376 our employment, our investments, our purchases, our payment of taxes, and our manner of
377 living. These activities may be a source of harm to others, whether overtly or in the covert
378 forms that are inherent in some of our long-established social practices and institutions.

379 Friends support those who refuse to cooperate with military conscription as well as those who
380 perform alternative service as conscientious objectors. While counseling against military
381 service, we hold in love our members who feel they must undertake it.

382 We work as we are able to alleviate the suffering caused by war. While acknowledging the
383 contributions that military forces have made in some situations to the relief of suffering, we
384 would much prefer that the nations of the world engage in nonviolent actions and
385 commitments to undertake humanitarian missions.

386 We would ourselves refrain from participating in all forms of violence, oppression, and
387 environmental degradation while supporting efforts to secure international agreements for the
388 elimination of armaments and to remove the domination of militarism in our society. We would
389 work with others to increase understanding at all levels, from the kindergarten to the United
390 Nations, of proven techniques for the nonviolent resolution and transformation of conflict. And
391 we would support programs of conversion to peaceful uses of facilities built for war. Friends
392 since William Penn have promoted institutions of peace. We apply our gifts—of spirit, of
393 intellect, of time and energy—to work for an international order which redirects resources from
394 the manufacture of arms to providing for human needs and the preservation of the earth.

395 Responsibilities of Citizenship

396 Friends recognize that the state is a necessary instrument for meeting human needs and for
397 maintaining an orderly society with justice under law for all.

398 Thus Friends are not opposed to all forms of physical constraint. For instance, it is sometimes
399 necessary and proper for peace officers to use minimal forms of physical constraints in dealing
400 with persons who do injury to others or who will not cooperate with just law. But Friends
401 oppose the use of either physical or psychological violence in maintaining public order.

402 As members of society, and also as part of our witness to what society may become, Friends are
403 called to participate actively in public life. As citizens, Friends bear witness by demonstrating
404 respect for others while faithfully pursuing our leadings. From our earliest days Friends have
405 counseled obedience to the state except when the law or ruling involved has appeared to be
406 contrary to divine leading. In that case, Friends take prayerful counsel before responding. This
407 counsel includes testing one’s proposed action by the judgment of the meeting. When the

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408 decision is to refuse obedience to the law or order of the state, in accordance with the dictates
409 of conscience, it is proper for Friends to act openly and to make clear the grounds of the action.

410 If the decision involves incurring legal penalties, Friends generally have suffered willingly for the
411 sake of our convictions. Friends not personally involved in such actions can strengthen the
412 meeting community by supporting our fellow members with spiritual encouragement and,
413 when necessary, with material aid. In public office, Friends have an opportunity to bear witness
414 to the power which integrity, courage, respect for others, and careful attention to different
415 points of view can exert in creating a just community. But if a Friend encounters a conflict
416 between faithfulness to God and an apparent duty as a public official, a prayerful search for
417 divine guidance may lead either to a suitable resolution of the conflict or to a decision to resign.

418 Stewardship of the Earth {The Ecojustice Working Group has agreed to review and revise this
419 section.}

420 All that we have in ourselves and our possessions are gifts from God entrusted to us for our
421 responsible use. Jesus reminds us that we must not lay up earthly treasures for ourselves, for
422 where our treasures are, there will our hearts be also. We cannot serve both God and
423 Mammon.

424 Stewardship is a coming together of our major testimonies. To be good stewards in God’s
425 world, calls on us to examine and consider the ways in which our testimonies for peace,
426 equality and simplicity interact to guide our relationships with all life.

427 *O that we who declare against wars, and acknowledge our trust to be in God only, may*
428 *walk in the light, and thereby examine our foundation and motives in holding great*
429 *estates! May we look upon our treasures, the furniture of our houses, and our garments,*
430 *and try whether the seeds of war have nourishment in these our possessions.*

431 John Woolman, c. 1770

432 In a world of economic interactions far more complex than that John Woolman lived in, Friends
433 need to examine their decisions about obtaining, holding, and using money and other assets to
434 see whether they find in them the seeds, not only of war, but also of self-indulgence, injustice
435 and ecological disaster. Good stewardship of economic resources consists both in avoidance of
436 those evils and in actions that advance peace, simple living, justice and a healthy ecosystem.
437 Good stewardship also requires attention to the economic needs of Quaker and other
438 organizations that advance Friends’ testimonies.

439 Right Sharing

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440 Friends worldwide have accepted the idea that the testimony of equality in the economic realm
441 implies a commitment to the sharing of the world’s resources. Friends in comfortable
442 circumstances are encouraged to find practical expression of the testimony of simplicity in their
443 earning and their spending. They must consider the meaning for their own lives of economic
444 equality and simplicity, and what level of income is consonant with their conclusions. They
445 should consider likewise what portion of that income should be shared beyond the immediate
446 family. That decision entails balancing the social value of self-sufficiency against the social value
447 of greater help for those ore needy. It also requires judgments about what expenditures are
448 essential and what are discretionary, and about the values that will underlie discretionary
449 expenditures.

450 Walking Gently on the Earth

451 We recognize that the well-being of the earth is a fundamental spiritual concern. From the
452 beginning, it was through the wonders of nature that people saw God. How we treat the earth
453 and its creatures is a basic part of our relationship with God. Our planet as a whole, not just the
454 small parts of it in our immediate custody, requires our responsible attention.

455 As Friends become aware of the interconnectedness of all life on this planet and the
456 devastation caused by neglect of any part of it, we have become more willing to extend our
457 sense of community to encompass all living things. We must now consider whether we should
458 lay aside the belief that we humans are acting as stewards of the natural world, and instead
459 view human actions as the major threat to the ecosystem.

460 Friends are indeed called to walk gently on the earth. Wasteful and extravagant consumption is
461 a major cause of destruction of the environment. The right sharing of the world’s remaining
462 resources requires that developed nations reduce their present levels of consumption so that
463 people in underdeveloped nations can have more, and the earth’s life-sustaining systems can
464 be restored. The world cannot tolerate indefinitely the present rate of consumption by
465 technologically developed nations.

466 Friends are called to become models and patterns of simple living and concern for the earth.
467 Some may find it difficult to change their accustomed lifestyle; others recognize the need and
468 have begun to adopt ways of life which put the least strain on the world’s resources of clean air,

469 A serious threat to the planet is the population explosion and consequent famine, war and
470 devastation. Called on to make decisions that simplify our lives, we may find that the most
471 difficult to accept will be limiting the number of children we have.

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472 Voluntary simplicity in living and restraint in procreation hold the promise of ecological
473 redemption and spiritual renewal.

474 Justice

475 Friends believe there is that of God in every person, and thus we believe in human equality
476 before God. Friends pioneered in recognizing the gifts and rights of women. Women were
477 ministers and leaders of the early meetings. Friends came more slowly to recognize the evil of
478 slavery and of discrimination in general, and have often been guilty of sharing the prejudices of
479 the broader society. In recent years, Friends have discovered and taken stands against other
480 forms of discrimination and oppression to which they had earlier been insensitive. An element
481 of that insensitivity for some has been a failure to recognize the privileged status many
482 American Friends enjoy. As we continue to seek the Light, ingrained habits and attitudes are
483 subject to searching reexamination.

484 Affirmation of the principle of equality among human beings in the sight of God is important
485 and necessary, but it is not sufficient. Realization of equality involves such matters as
486 independence and control of one’s own life. Therefore Friends aid the nonviolent efforts of the
487 exploited to attain self-determination and social, political, and economic justice, and to change
488 attitudes and practices formerly taken for granted. Friends seek to bring to light structures,
489 institutions, language and thought processes which subtly support discrimination and
490 exploitation. Beyond their own Religious Society, Friends promote Spirit-led, sense of the
491 meeting decision-making as an instrument of equality. And Friends continue to examine their
492 own attitudes and practices to test whether they contribute as much as they might to social,
493 political, and economic justice.

494 Friends work with groups that have been victimized by prejudice and exploitation. Too often
495 this work has been difficult because of resistance by the prejudiced and by the exploiters, even
496 within the membership of the Religious Society of Friends. The problem of prejudice is
497 complicated by advantages that have come to some at the expense of others. Exploitation
498 impairs the human quality of the exploiter as well as of the exploited.

499 Many early Friends were victims of an arbitrary and unreasonable criminal justice system.
500 Knowledge of that experience has opened many later Friends to that of God in incarcerated
501 persons. Friends continue to undertake work in prisons, ministering to the spiritual and
502 material needs of inmates. Believing that the penal system often reflects structural and
503 systemic injustice in our society, Friends seek alternatives. Friends have acted out of the
504 conviction that redemption and restorative justice, not retribution, are the proper goals of the
505 criminal justice system.

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506 Seeking to heal the wounds of criminal actions, Friends are called to many different kinds of
507 service in the criminal justice system. Prison visiting, victim support services, conflict resolution
508 training for staff of correctional institutions and offenders, and work to abolish capital
509 punishment are typical of these services. Such service is undertaken in order to restore the
510 victim, the offender, and the community to the greatest extent possible. The healing love, and
511 trust in divine leading that such disciplined service requires, can greatly assist the rebuilding of
512 broken lives.

513

514 **III. A. 2. The Person**

515 **Introduction**

516 It is not easy to live as Friends in today’s world—to remain true to our heritage and principles,
517 while trying to be sensitive to new situations. But it has always been this way. Each generation
518 of Friends has been faced with challenges to our ideas about marriage, family life, the
519 education and discipline of children, personal relationships, and various social practices.

520 Friends understand that we are helped to meet such challenges, and that our individual lives
521 are nurtured and enriched, when we share a reliance upon God. This comes through
522 involvement in meetings for worship and business, worship sharing, retreats, workshops, study
523 groups, reading groups, and social and recreational gatherings.

524 Within most meetings there are individuals, groups and established procedures that can offer
525 discreet, confidential, loving support to those who may need it. When personal difficulties
526 arise, shared prayerful and determined efforts to seek God’s loving support can help us gain
527 better understanding. Those efforts may include the use of a clearness committee, as well as
528 attentive listening to the Inward Teacher during worship. It is important for the meeting to
529 recognize its limitations and to decide when it is appropriate to seek help and support
530 elsewhere.

531 **Life Passages**

532 **Marriage**

533 From the beginning, Friends have emphasized the equality of marriage partners. George Fox
534 admonished that Friends should be married “as though they were not, both husband and wife
535 free to do God’s work and not possessive of one another.” Later, Lucretia Mott wrote that “in
536 the marriage union, the independence of the husband and wife will be equal, their dependence

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537 mutual, and their obligations reciprocal.” Many modern Friends would add “and some of their
538 roles interchangeable,” to Mott’s observation and substitute “partners” for “husband and wife”
539 in both of these statements.

540 Formal declaration of commitment in the presence of God and Friends under the care of the
541 meeting sets a foundation for a shared life of spiritual wholeness. Such a religious commitment
542 liberates rather than constricts the couple’s natural impulses toward passion and spontaneity
543 and becomes a source of joy, not only for the couple but also for the meeting and all others in
544 the couple’s life. A meeting has a commitment to nurture a marriage whether or not that
545 marriage began under its care. [See p xx in the section “Tools for Discernment” for a detailed
546 account of the Quaker Marriage Procedure.]

547 Relationships which were clearly entered into under the covering of the Spirit may nevertheless
548 experience severe strains and difficulties. The meeting needs to recognize such situations early
549 and be prepared to help with tender understanding and sensitivity. The offering of the services
550 of a clearness committee (see p. xx) may be helpful. The meeting may also assist the couple in
551 finding and paying for professional counseling services such as those associated with the yearly
552 meeting. The couple and those counseling with them may wish to consider together such
553 questions as:

- 554 • Have you sought divine guidance for the situation in which you now find yourselves?
- 555 • Have you found it possible to acknowledge that of God in each other as you work
556 through this difficulty?
- 557 • Do commitments to such testimonies as equality, peace, and integrity continue to guide
558 your relationship?

559 The meeting community may not be able to help a couple ameliorate their difficulties. The
560 relationship may have deteriorated beyond the point of reconciliation. Strong feelings may
561 challenge the meeting community, but should not prevent it from continuing to offer prayerful,
562 sensitive support to all concerned. This applies most especially to the children, who may need
563 help in recognizing that the separation of their parents will significantly change many aspects of
564 the family situation, but not the love and commitment the parents have for them.

565 Among other responses to a couple that decides to end their marriage, the meeting could again
566 offer the services of a clearness committee, to help the couple consider the questions just
567 noted and also such additional ones as:

- 568 • Have you been able to make careful and loving efforts to help your children understand
569 what brought about this situation?

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- 570 • How will you continue to relate with your children to show them that you love them?
571 • Have you carefully considered equitable ways of handling property and financial
572 matters?

573 Divorce or the dissolution of any committed relationship is an intimate matter accompanied by
574 strong feelings. The meeting role is difficult; it should not become intrusive. The need is to be
575 careful and even-handed, keeping in contact with all family members and all parties to the
576 divorce. All concerned need to be encouraged to continue their lives as Friends.

577 Family formation

578 The decision to extend a family either by birth or adoption is momentous. As with marriage, in
579 which a couple enters into a commitment in the presence of God, the families and the
580 worshipping community, so it is with the commitment to have children. The meeting can
581 support the couple as they consider whether to undertake this commitment, by offering the
582 services of a clearness committee. It can also provide support for the couple through pregnancy
583 or adoption proceedings, and then as the couple adjusts to the demands and joys of caring for
584 an infant. It can encourage the couple to embrace the idea that ‘it takes a meeting to raise a
585 child.’

586 Some meetings have embraced the practice of inviting new parents to introduce their infants to
587 the meeting, and for those infants to be formally welcomed into the meeting community. In
588 this way, parents are supported as they begin to involve their children in the life of the meeting,
589 and to incorporate practices that support and nurture each child’s life of spiritual faithfulness,
590 joy, and service.

591 Death and Bereavement

592

593 Friends are advised to prepare for death and for the possibility of incompetence in their last
594 days to simplify the tasks their families will need to undertake and to spare them unnecessary
595 pain and confusion. Such preparations would include:

- 596 • Providing for the care of dependents;
597 • Providing for the disposal of real property, financial assets, and personal and household
598 goods;
599 • Developing living wills, or their equivalents, and durable powers of attorney;
600 • Recording wishes relating to the body after death, whether for burial or cremation or
601 donation for medical or scientific purposes; and

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- 602 • Identifying the locations of any pertinent documents for the benefit of those persons
603 who will be expected to act on the information in those documents after the death: for
604 instance, an attorney, and children or other members of the family.

605 It is expected that instructions for a memorial meeting under the care of the meeting will be
606 kept in the meeting’s files and will conform to the true simplicity appropriate to a meeting for
607 worship.

608 Responsibilities of the Meeting

609 The meeting will regularly remind its members of their responsibilities to make suitable
610 preparations for death and for the possibility of incompetence as noted above, and will provide
611 members with relevant sources of information and assistance that can help in fulfilling their
612 responsibilities. It will also ask members to share with the meeting their wishes relating to the
613 body after death, their instructions for a memorial meeting, and anything else that could help
614 the meeting fulfill its responsibilities.

615 Upon the death of a member, of a person in a member’s family, or of a person with a close
616 association to the meeting but not a member, either the meeting’s care and counsel committee
617 or some other designated committee will arrange to visit the family in order to extend the
618 meeting’s sympathy for the bereaved, and gently to assist the family as it adjusts to its loss.

619 It is expected that the meeting will be especially attentive to the needs of family members
620 during what may be an extended period of mourning. The death of a loved one may leave a
621 survivor alone and unable to cope with unfamiliar financial obligations and difficult decisions
622 about property and arrangements for the future. Emotions surrounding the loss are likely to
623 run very deep for a long time, even where death has come as release from suffering. When
624 sudden death by disease or accident strikes younger couples, especially those with children, the
625 emotional and financial strain upon the survivors can be very heavy. In all these cases, not only
626 the care and counsel committee but all members of a meeting are expected to provide active,
627 sensitive support that extends well beyond the memorial meeting.

628 The meeting may be able to help in many practical ways including hospitality for those family
629 and friends who come from a distance, child care, meals, and housework. The meeting will
630 respond with sensitivity to the family’s wishes and, if asked, assist in notifying relatives and
631 friends, and the public press.

632 The meeting will offer to conduct a memorial meeting under its care and, if asked, to assist the
633 family in arranging for private memorial gatherings. Members of the meeting are encouraged
634 to support the family by attending the memorial meeting. If the family’s plans do not include a

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635 memorial meeting, it may be rightly ordered for the meeting to hold one. In addition, the
636 meeting may wish to prepare a memorial minute as an expression of its appreciation of the life
637 and service of the deceased member.

638 Memorial Meetings for Worship

639 When Friends experience the death of a member, they gather for a memorial meeting for
640 worship. As the meeting begins, a designated person may describe the nature of the occasion
641 and invite those present to speak if led to do so. While the worshippers remember the life and
642 service of the deceased and mourn the passing, they also celebrate God’s gift of life and the
643 beauty of human character. Members of the family may request that passages of Scripture,
644 poetry, prayer, or music be shared during the meeting. Those present may be drawn to speak
645 of their memories of the deceased, whether poignant, loving, grateful, instructive, or even
646 humorous. A memorial meeting is a time when the mystery of death is deeply felt, and when
647 the presence of God and those gathered in worship can bring comfort, hope and consolation.

648 Meetings may find it helpful to the bereaved family to hold a simple reception following the
649 memorial meeting. Such an occasion gives an opportunity to express grief and love and
650 thanksgiving, person to person. For many it will also serve as a helpful reentry into everyday
651 life.

652 If ashes are to be deposited or scattered in some cherished spot or if there is to be an
653 interment, whether done privately or as part of the memorial meeting, the family may ask that
654 someone prepare a brief service of farewell. This can be a particularly poignant moment, and
655 the meeting needs to be sensitive to these emotions.

656 Personal Relationships

657 Family Life and the Home

658 Home and family can be both a refuge from the hazards of the world and a path to a better
659 world. In a Quaker family, a child first becomes aware of the presence of God in our lives. This is
660 encouraged when the family adopts spiritual practices as a regular and essential part of its life.
661 Such practices can include shared worship and prayer, reading from the Bible and other
662 scripture, and silent grace at meals.

663 As with the meeting itself, a Quaker home seeks to bring all its members into unity of spirit and
664 practice. Not least, this entails cultivating an appropriate balance between the exercise of
665 authority and the development of individual autonomy. Parents have an obligation to be guided
666 by the Inward Teacher in the exercise of their authority, but ideally the whole family will unite

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667 in seeking such guidance. Fair, loving, and just discipline practiced among all family members
668 brings a sense of security to the children and a sense of order to the adults. And the best gift
669 parents can offer their children is to exemplify conscientious, consistent, Spirit-led conduct day
670 in and day out.

671 Open discussion contributes to a loving, patient atmosphere in the home. Developing
672 expectations for interpersonal relationship based on mutual respect and care.. The relationship
673 between inward discipline and rules of behavior needs to be continually reviewed with
674 children. Children need to understand that rules are not for them only but that parents too are
675 committed to a disciplined life consistent with the life of the Spirit. If a family has continual
676 problems with rules, a family meeting for clearness may help resolve difficulties. Meetings can
677 also help.

678 Conflict in a family is natural; when lovingly and constructively dealt with, it is an opportunity
679 for growth and sometimes also an affirmation of individual leadings. Learning to handle
680 disagreements in a calm and fair manner prepares the way for solving differences in school, the
681 neighborhood, and the larger society.

682 Family recreation promotes restoration, solidarity, and spiritual well-being. Such recreation
683 includes reading aloud, music, gardening, taking a walk, and arts and crafts as well as games
684 and sports. Both competitive and non-competitive games can teach lessons of fairness,
685 sportsmanship, and self-esteem. All such activities develop fellowship within the family. Simple
686 family recreation can bring balance into life and contribute to the wholeness of the family and
687 each of its members. In the loving home and family, all members learn about equality and its
688 limitations, simple forms of stewardship, integrity in its many guises, simplicity in all its
689 complexities, and how hard but how satisfying it is to be peaceable. Indeed, the family can be
690 the most immediate and basic context in which individuals learn to live Friends testimonies.

691 Two of our testimonies, simplicity and stewardship, may be especially important for family life.
692 A family that strives to practice simplicity will exercise stewardship in the use of its social and
693 material resources. This will include decisions regarding the family’s financial commitments to
694 its monthly, quarterly and yearly meetings. The importance of other questions such as family
695 witness, service to others, the many ramifications of the peace testimony and equality also
696 need to be recognized. Participation of all family members in discussions and decisions
697 regarding possessions and activities helps children develop their capacity to make sound
698 judgments about the value of time and worth of different activities, and their understanding of
699 spirit-led decision-making in which ego and personal preferences are less significant than what

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700 is in the best interest of the family as a whole. And the parents have an opportunity, in such
701 discussions and decisions, to model a process that gives priority to faithfulness and service.

702 Traditional families once constituted the great majority of the meeting community. Today’s
703 membership reflects societal changes resulting in nontraditional families: single parent
704 households, same gender commitments, blended families. Whatever their composition,
705 families remain an inspiring and vital ingredient of our meeting communities.

706 Sex and Sexuality

707 Friends seek to acknowledge and nurture sexuality as a gift of God that celebrates human love
708 with joy and intimacy. In defining healthy sexuality, Friends are guided by our testimonies: that
709 sexual relationships be equal, not exploitative; that sexual behavior be marked by integrity; and
710 that sex be an act of love, not aggression. Sexuality is at once an integral and an intricate part of
711 personality. Our understanding of our own sexuality is an essential aspect of our journey
712 toward wholeness. Learning to incorporate sexuality in our lives responsibly, joyfully, and with
713 integrity is a lifelong process beginning in childhood.

714 Friends are wary of a preset moral code to govern sexual activity. The sacramental quality of
715 the sexual relationship depends upon Spirit as well as the intentions of the persons concerned.
716 With guidance from the Inward Teacher, we can examine relationships honestly, with the
717 strength to reconcile the often conflicting demands of body, heart and spirit. Though Friends do
718 respect individual leadings, this does not sanction license in sexual behavior. Precisely because
719 our sexuality is so powerful, seeking the Divine becomes all important. The self-discipline and
720 obedience to Spirit thus called for is more personal, and perhaps more difficult, than adherence
721 to an external code. For many Friends, “celibate in singleness, faithful in marriage” has proven
722 consonant with the divine will. Sexual activity, whether or not it includes intercourse, is never
723 without consequence.

724 Current global population trends and concern for the equitable distribution of resources
725 require us to ask what good stewardship of the earth entails for our decisions about sex and
726 childbearing. Friends approve the concept of family planning and endorse efforts to make
727 pertinent education and services widely available. We are in unity about the value of human
728 life, but not about abortion. We are urged to seek the guidance of the Spirit and to support one
729 another in avoiding those situations that contribute to abortion.

730 Sex Education

731 A Quaker home establishes an atmosphere where openness and honesty prevail. It is within the
732 intimate family circle that children establish their identities as persons; an atmosphere which

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733 supports their feelings of confidence encourages this development. Children at a very early age
734 develop a sense of their own gender identity and are curious about gender and sexual
735 differences. Within a loving and secure family, young children are encouraged to ask questions
736 about gender and sex, and parents acquire the confidence to answer those questions.

737 Sex education needs to begin early with the use of appropriate terms that children understand.
738 The level of understanding is not uniform, and wise parents will judge each child’s capacity to
739 absorb answers to questions. Simple, direct answers need be no threat to a child’s innocence,
740 and parents do the child no favors by surrounding the subject with fables and mystery.
741 Undramatic introduction of the basic physiological facts of human sexuality is the best
742 preparation for the more sophisticated education needed during the years of puberty and
743 adolescence.

744 Parents are expected to provide sex education for their children who have come of age sexually
745 with sympathy and patience. Such education will include clear, explicit information regarding
746 sexually transmitted diseases and AIDS. Parents need to remember their own reactions during
747 this confusing and volatile age. Whatever the sexual mores of the time may be, and whatever
748 adolescent peers may do or say, it is important for parents to help their children look past peer
749 pressure toward what contributes to loving, responsible relationships.

750 In this, as in all facets of education, adults need to remain teachable. Sex education is not
751 necessarily a one-way street. Parents may learn from their children about societal problems of
752 which they have never been aware. Sensitive listening between parents and children will go a
753 long way in establishing mutual understanding.

754 Addictive Behaviors

755 Early Friends understood that drunkenness was incompatible with a life in the Spirit. Since
756 then, many other mind-affecting drugs have come to be widely used. Like alcohol, they
757 separate the user from God. With the proliferation of some drugs, whole communities have
758 broken down.

759 The use of tobacco can cause serious illness in both the user and those regularly exposed to
760 second-hand smoke. Smoking deadens the senses; it can come between the user and the Spirit.

761 Gambling, even in the forms of sweepstakes and lotteries, poses dangers to the individual and
762 the community. It often becomes addictive, bringing ruin to the gambler’s family. Gambling
763 harms the community by fostering a get-rich-quick and something-for-nothing attitude that
764 contributes to an unwholesome materialism. Habitual gambling makes undue demands on the

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765 gambler’s time and attention, leading to a life inconsistent with our testimonies on simplicity
766 and integrity.

767 Any form of addictive behavior, whether manifested in gambling, the use of drugs, tobacco or
768 alcohol or other compulsive attachments, is a symptom of a disease which cannot be controlled
769 by reason or an act of will. It is a continuing distraction from a well-ordered, meaningful life
770 that can affect the whole family. While Friends have intelligent compassion toward victims of
771 addiction, they will aid and encourage them in seeking appropriate treatment. We also need to
772 help the children in our meetings and schools to understand these effects and the relationship
773 of addictive behavior to issues of social justice including the marketing of addictive substances,
774 the violence associated with the distribution of drugs and alcohol, the root causes of some
775 homelessness, and the tendency to use state supported lotteries to support services for the
776 young and the aging.