

Making Spirit-Guided Group Decision-making Work

To succeed, this approach involves:

- willingness to trust each other deeply in the shared effort to discover what Spirit is guiding the group into
- letting go of one's own personal sense of what the outcome needs to be
- seeking unity not just with *each other* but with a Divine Guide capable of guiding us as a community.

What does it take to listen together to each other and to this inward voice of Spirit in our midst?

Some of the components necessary for success include:

1. **A culture in the meeting** where members understand and are willing to enter in the process
2. **Careful preparation of items** in advance of business meeting to sort out which items really need to come to the meeting for decisions. This makes it possible to move more slowly and prayerfully through those really important issues where decisions need to be reached by the meeting as a whole. Avoiding reading reports that can be read earlier or later.
3. **An atmosphere of expectant waiting** upon Spirit during meeting for business.
4. **Presenting one's intuition "provisionally"**: This involves willingness in those present to share their personal sense of what Spirit is asking the group to do in a manner that avoids an "authoritative" tone - speaking with humility in a way that communicates honor and respect towards differing discernments of what is right.
5. **Willingness to "let go"** once one has shared one's own sense of what is right, trusting to the wisdom of the group to either unite with this or to move in a different direction. (In most cases, speaking once should be able to make one's intuition clear!) What gets in the way of our ability to trust this process deeply?
6. **A skilled and assertive clerk** able to discern the "sense of the meeting" (i.e. what God appears to be asking the group to do) through the different expressions from those present This is a challenging and powerful form of spiritual leadership.
7. **Eldership**: Some Friends have special gifts of "holding" this process through silent prayer. Everyone present, however, can help to hold the process prayerfully in their hearts.
8. **Patience and a sense of confidence** that the process can work well as intended.
 - Are there barriers you see in yourself to letting go of *your* sense of what is right and trusting the group to act rightly? How can you recognize when this is happening?
 - How can each person present contribute to the group's ability to move into unity?
 - How can the meeting nurture a more faithful process of shared decision-making?

Further reading:

- *The Four Pillars of Meeting for Business*, by Deborah Humphries
http://www.inwardlight.org/four_pillars_of_meeting_for_business.html
- Michael Sheeran, *Beyond Majority Rule: Voteless Decisions in the Religious Society of Friends* (Part II, chaps 1, 2, 3, 5) – an in-depth study of Quaker business process by a Jesuit priest.