

Chapel Hill Friends Meeting, Annual Clerks Retreat, September 14, 2019
Summary

The annual Clerks Retreat was held on the morning of September 14 in the multi-purpose room. Eighteen Friends gathered to learn and refresh about clerking committees. After silent worship, Meeting Clerk Chris Stanley shared his understanding of the expectations of a committee clerk, and roles and responsibilities. He emphasized that a clerk is a servant to the Meeting and/or a committee. Logistics in preparation for a meeting include informing the group ahead of time about the agenda and issues. A clerk seeks unity of a group by facilitating, listening deeply, using silence and a worship sharing approach, and clarifying information, issues and solutions. Nurturing participation by all members of a committee, and summarizing in a clear way help bring a committee to unity or not.

Friends added their perspectives on clerking challenges and approaches. Words used included kindness, balancing process and task accomplishment, delegating tasks, letting tasks go undone if leadings are insufficient, sticking to an agenda, seasoning for later attention, discerning the sense of a meeting, and coordinating with a recorder to produce clear minutes. Tools for clerks include an annual committee calendar to help structure meeting agendas. Preparation for a committee meeting as a worship service can help set the tone. Checking in with members at the beginning of a meeting helps establish relationships and enable unity. Coordinating with other committees is essential at times.

Beyond logistics and tools, the retreat took time to discuss the spirit-led approach to committee meetings. Friends had read an article from Friends General Conference by Deborah Haines, "A Practical Mystic's Guide to Committee Clerking" and formed small groups for discussion. When the full group reconvened, Friends shared their observations about handling conflict, building community, listening deeply, honoring process, the importance of opening and closing worship, grounding committee work in the Light, connecting within the group, accepting imperfection, clarifying missions and callings, and treating time as precious, but taking time for a spirit-led process.

Evaluations of the Clerks Retreat were positive with emphasis on the value of sharing experience and understanding, describing ways to prepare for meetings, and following a Quaker process in conducting meetings. Friends appreciated meeting in small groups and getting to know one another better.

For more information about clerking, please ask a member of ministry and worship and/or see the website chapelhillfriends.org, and from the Menu select "Faith and Practice" and select "Guidelines for Clerks."