

NEYM *Faith and Practice* Revision Committee

Chapter 11: General Advices and Queries

Working Paper distributed March 2009

Dear Friends:

Here is the next building block in the revised New England Yearly Meeting *Faith and Practice* – a working paper for Chapter 11: General Advices and Queries. Following the Preface (given preliminary approval in 2005), we submitted the foundational chapter of the revision: *Worship* (preliminary approval in 2007). A chapter on *A Brief History of Friends in New England* followed, giving context to who we are today (preliminary approval in 2008). In 2008 we also distributed a working paper on the chapter *Integration of Faith and Life — the Meaning, Understanding and Use of Testimonies*. We sense a connection between Testimonies, living out the truth we discover, and general Advices and Queries, which are disciplines for discovering how to do this.

All these chapters can be downloaded from the NEYM Faith and Practice website: <http://neym.org/fandp/> or paper copies can be requested from the NEYM office: 901 Pleasant St., Worcester MA 06102-1908.

In the 1985 *Faith and Practice*, advices and queries were grouped under topic headings such as “Worship,” “Personal Conduct,” and “Peace and Reconciliation.” In this revision such advices and queries will be part of chapters on those topics. For example advices and queries on Worship appear in the chapter on Worship. The advices and queries in the chapter we now submit are truly general; they are focused on the fundamental aspects of a faithful life.

Many Friends appreciated the Queries for Boys and Girls that appeared in the 1966 edition, and asked us to explore including queries for children in this revision. We would like to do so. We encourage Friends to consider how the queries in this chapter could be used by children. We are grateful to the NEYM Christian Education Committee for sending us a far-ranging set of queries divided into twelve topics that will be considered for use in appropriate chapters.

We have placed information on the history and use of advices and queries in two outlined boxes rather than integrating them into the primary body of the chapter. We hope to explore graphic design options which will make this information available in the chapter without interrupting the main body of text.

We have at times received comments based on reading only a portion of a chapter, when the rest of the chapter may have met the concerns raised or altered the feedback. Please read the entire chapter as distributed, if at all possible. The committee will appreciate receiving comments on the General Advices and Queries working paper by November 1, 2009. Please email these to fandp@neym.org (preferred method) or send them by post to Jan Hoffman, clerk, 343 West Street, Amherst, MA 01002.

IMPORTANT NOTE: As a result of an email server issue, we did not receive input on the Testimonies working paper from Sessions 2008 through February 2009. This problem has been resolved, and we would be deeply grateful to meetings and individuals for re-submitting their comments to fandp@neym.org.

Jan Hoffman, Clerk, for the committee

Marion Athearn	Maggie Edmondson	Melissa Foster	Sue Reilly
Betsy Cazden	Eric Edwards	Eleanor Godway	Joyce Sutherland
Lee Noël Chase	Kristna Evans	David Haines	Anne Thompson
David Coletta	Arthur Fink	Phebe McCosker	
	Susan Furry	Scott Nielsen	

Draft Table of Contents for revision of the 1985 NEYM *Faith and Practice* with some possible topics listed — for information only

We offer this working draft of a table of contents to put draft texts for the revised book in the context of the overall document. In chapters two through seven, we expect to include theology, history, past NEYM minutes, process and procedure, and advices and queries relating to the chapter topic. In chapters five, six and seven, we have listed some of the topics we expect to include in these chapters. It is not a complete list of topics, nor have they been placed in any particular order. Some of these topics will be treated more than once, depending on the perspective. For example, in chapter five, marriage would be treated from a meeting perspective while in chapter six it would be treated from an individual perspective.

Preface. Received preliminary approval at NEYM 2005 sessions.

1. **Illustrative experiences of Friends** (quotations from Friends across time and cultures)
2. **Worship.** *Given preliminary approval at NEYM 2007 Sessions.*
3. **Corporate discernment** (decision-making)
4. **Integration of faith and life: the meaning, understanding and use of testimonies**
A draft of a working paper was presented at NEYM 2008 Sessions.
5. **Living our faith in the meeting community**
gospel order; responding to conflict; recognition of gifts and leadings; pastoral care; death and dying; religious education (both adult and child); finance/stewardship; membership; marriage; civil unions; separation and divorce; conscientious objection and the draft; meetinghouses; burial grounds
6. **Living our faith in Personal Lives**
membership
life transitions: adolescence; conscientious objection and the draft; job change; retirement; marriage; new babies; separation and divorce; aging; death and dying; grief and loss; divorce
family life: finance/stewardship; marriage; civil unions; children; parenting; responding to conflict; religious education; separation and divorce
7. **Living our faith in the world beyond the Meeting**
ecumenical and interfaith relations; economic justice; gender justice; racial justice; restorative justice; right relationship with the earth; stewardship/ right sharing of world resources; civic and community responsibilities; conscientious objection and the draft; pacifism; responding to conflict; outreach; evangelism; Friends understanding of mission.
8. **Organization**
Monthly Meetings
Quarterly Meetings
The Yearly Meeting, including NEYM connection to FGC, FUM, FWCC
9. ***A Brief History of Friends in New England***
Given preliminary approval at NEYM 2008 Sessions.
10. ***Revisions to this Faith and Practice*** *Given preliminary approval at NEYM 2006 Sessions.*
11. **General Advices and Queries** *Distributed in March 2009*

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NEYM *Faith and Practice* Revision Committee
Chapter 11: General Advices and Queries
Working Paper distributed March 2009

[Note to readers of this draft: paragraph numbers will not appear in the printed book.]

General Advices and Queries

- 1 How can we be faithful to the guidance of the Inward Teacher? We yearn for lives of integrity; lives whose faith and practice form a seamless whole. Advices and queries are tools for self-examination we can use as individuals and meeting communities as we strive for that goal. They have served generations of Friends in our search for a life centered in the Spirit. Pray with advices and queries; hold them in your hearts. Consider each of them. Feel which speak to you, challenge you, show you the way. When a query could be answered with a simple “yes” or “no,” go further and ask “why,” “how,” or “when.”
- 2 Advices and queries carry the weight of our experience and wisdom as a religious society. They are used in personal devotional practice, for discernment, for inspiration, and to stimulate spiritual dialogue in meetings.
- 3 You will find Advices and Queries in most chapters of this book, addressing their specific topics. This chapter contains those of a more general nature relating to faithfulness.

ADVICES for individuals and meeting communities

- 4 Our most compelling message is that God is active among us, available to transform, guide, comfort, and minister to each one of us directly.
- 5 Make a quiet place in your daily life for communion with God. Pray for those who are near to you as well as those who are distant. Worship as often as you can.
- 6 Read the *Bible*, the writings of Friends, and all writings which reveal the ways of God.
- 7 Appreciate that doubt and questioning can also lead to spiritual growth and to a greater awareness of the Light that is available to us all.
- 8 Ground your spiritual life in your own experience of the Divine, refraining from professing what you do not possess.
- 9 Let your faith free you from crippling fears so that you may live adventurously, in holy obedience.
- 10 Let your life speak.
- 11 Remember that the Inner Light does not lead us to do that which is right in our own eyes, but that which is right in God’s eyes.
- 12 Be aware of the Spirit at work in the ordinary activities and experience of your daily life. There is inspiration to be found all around us, in the natural world, in the sciences and arts, in our work and friendships, in our sorrows as well as in our joys.

- 13 Be open to and alert for how the Spirit may be speaking to you in fresh ways, leading you in new directions. Discern whether your service is inspired and led by the Spirit. Do not take on tasks beyond your strength or capabilities or ones that properly belong to someone else.
- 14 Test your leadings with your faith community. Look for the truth that comes from the gathered meeting.
- 15 Be alert to how “way opens.” It may be revealed through a door closing.
- 16 Seek to know those Friends whose theology and practice of Quakerism are different from your own.
- 17 Learn about others’ experiences of the Light. Take opportunities to enter into prayer and work with the wider community of faith. No one human being or group has the full measure of the Light.
- 18 Find ways to articulate your faith so that it may be shared with others.
- 19 Let your life be so joyful and Spirit-led that other people will seek to know more about your source of spiritual strength. In a world filled with fear, violence, poverty, and pain, the testimonies and practices of Friends may be both a balm for those harmed by the ways of the world, and a model for seeking right relationship with one another and all of creation.
- 20 Let us be grateful for all that we have, neither reveling in our own gifts nor coveting those of others. Your time, talents, energy, money, material goods and other resources are not ends in themselves. They are God’s gifts to be used and shared according to the Light you are given. Share them with others; use them with humility, courtesy, and affection.
- 21 Guard against contentiousness and love of power.
- 22 Take heed, dear Friends, to the promptings of love and truth in your hearts. Seek to live in affection as true Friends in your meetings, in your families, in all your dealing with others, and in your relationship with outward society. The power of God is not used to compel us to Truth; therefore, let us renounce for ourselves the power of any person over any other and, compelling no one, seek to lead others to Truth through love. Let us teach by being ourselves teachable.
- 23 Remember that love is a gift of the Divine Spirit, not simply a human emotion. As imperfect human beings it is not always possible to feel loving toward one another, but by opening to the Light Within, we can receive and give love beyond our human abilities.
- 24 Attend to what love requires of you.

QUERIES for individuals and meeting communities

- 25 *What is your understanding of the Divine and how it works in you?*
- 26 *How does it feel to “live from the Center”?*
- 27 *What does it mean to listen to God?*
- 28 *With what emotion do you yield to God’s guidance?*
- 29 *To whom or to what do you feel accountable?*
- 30 *What happens when you feel unfaithful?*
- 31 *What canst thou say?*
- 32 *Are you aware of “that of God” in you and in all others?*
- 33 *Do you seek to understand where a person’s words come from when those words are strange or disturbing to you? Do you listen patiently and seek the truth that other people’s thoughts may contain for you? As you learn from others, are you willing to share with them what you in turn have learned?*
- 34 *Do you make a practice of turning to the Inner Light for guidance, remembering that living in the Spirit is a process of discernment?*
- 35 *Which parts of your life is God’s Truth seeking to illuminate?*
- 36 *Do you limit God in the ways you listen and the places you seek?*
- 37 *Are you teachable?*
- 38 *How do you interpret your faith in light of the Religious Society of Friends’ Christian heritage?*
- 39 *Does Jesus’ relationship with God challenge and inspire you?*
- 40 *Do you look for opportunities to deepen your understanding of the history and testimonies of the Religious Society of Friends? Do you inform yourself about the diversity of Friends’ theology and practice? Do you recognize that although the space within Quakerism is graciously large, it also has legitimate boundaries?*
- 41 *What is your understanding of our purpose as a Religious Society?*
- 42 *Do you seek “that of God” in Friends whose theology and practice of Quakerism is different from your own?*
- 43 *What is the relationship of your personal understanding of truth to the corporate truth of your faith community?*
- 44 *How do prevailing cultural values affect your life?*
- 45 *Do your actions reflect your beliefs? What is your life saying to others?*
- 46 *When pressure is brought upon you to lower your standard of integrity, how do you resist it?*
- 47 *Does your sense of faithfulness include keeping your commitments to yourself and to other people?*
- 48 *What are the tasks that seem important to your sense of who you are and who God is calling you to be? Have you been embracing or avoiding them?*

- 49 *Do you regard your time, talents, energy, money, material possessions, and other resources as gifts from God, to be held in trust and shared according to the Light you are given? How do you witness to this conviction in your life?*
- 50 *How do you distinguish between the leadings of the Divine and the pressures of the needy?*
- 51 *Have you learned to distinguish inspiration from impulse, insight from temptation, patience from laziness?*
- 52 *Are you ready to hear any concern God may lay on you, large or small? Are you ready to rest if God asks it of you?*
- 53 *Do you maintain an appropriate balance among work, service, worship, family, and recreation?*
- 54 *What does love require of you?*

The advices below will be set off as a unit by some graphic design means:

The following are advices of NEYM Young Adult Friends, inspired by their experience at the 2005 World Gathering of Young Friends in Lancaster, England. (See NEYM 2006 Sessions, Minute 51, p. 21- 22.)

Humbly seek out that of God in the way others live, and find what's deeply right in it. Talk about your spiritual journey explicitly. Find words for that which is hard or strange.

Evangelize. Spread the good news.

Never be absolutely sure that you are right.

Abandon your forms when they do not fulfill God's will.

Find in your faith things to live humbly by and to die for.

Do your work. Call others to do theirs.

With your sins and the sins of your parents: admit them, repent them, heal the wounds.

Read the Bible.

Have joyful worship. Do not always be somber.

Face your fears and your powerlessness. Have faith.

Know who you are spiritually, and trust God to know where you are going.

Deny the distractions. Follow only God.

Love boldly. Share deeply.

Forgive and forgive and forgive.

Extracts

Individual Experiences with Advices and Queries

Extract 11.1 *In 1652 Margaret Fell experienced the power of queries in the preaching of George Fox in her church in Ulverston.*

‘You will say, Christ saith this, and the apostles say this; but what canst thou say? Art thou a child of Light and hast walked in the Light, and what thou speakest is inwardly from God?’

This opened me so that it cut me to the heart; and then I saw clearly we were all wrong. So I sat me down in my pew again, and cried bitterly. And I cried in my spirit to the Lord, ‘We are all thieves, we are all thieves, we have taken the Scriptures in words and know nothing of them in ourselves.’

*‘The testimony of Margaret Fox concerning her late husband,’
in George Fox, Journal, 1694, p ii; bicent edn, 1891, vol. 2, pp. 512-514; not in Nickalls edn.*

Extract 11.2 *In 1864 Daniel Pickard bemoans changes in the Queries Addressed to Ministers and Elders by London Yearly Meeting.*

[Query pre-1832] ‘Are they preserved in love and unity with one another, harmoniously laboring for the advancement of Truth, and the spreading thereof?’

O! The thorough convincement of what the truth is; the allegiance to it; the oneness of heart and mind; the brotherly confidence, which must have been to a large extent the happy experience of Friends in those days, to warrant them in issuing so near, so intimate a Query as this! Alas! There is so such freedom, no such courage now...

[Query 1832] ‘Are Ministers and Elders preserved in love, and in unity one with another, *endeavouring* in harmony to promote the advancement and spreading of the truth?’

By the revision of 1860 all that remains to be answered as a query are the first few words, ‘are they preserved in love?’ ... [He objects to the reason given for this change, part of which states] ‘it has sometimes been felt difficult to tenderly sensitive minds to assent to a clear affirmative reply to this Query and the attempt to qualify the answer to meet such cases has tended rather to endanger that harmony, which it is the object of the Query to promote.’

Here again by a plausible frame of words, is a case of difficulty evaded and not met; the precious cause of Truth and of harmony therein, is affectedly promoted, but in reality dishonoured and let down. It is made to appear by the above extract that no particular disunity had existed among Ministers and Elders, except such as what as ascribable for its origin to the ‘tenderly sensitive’ condition or constitution of some minds. Oh! How deeply specious, how far from the simplicity of candour, is such language as this!

From “An Expostulation on Behalf of the Truth against departures in doctrine, practice and discipline in which the revised queries, rules, and advices, of London Yearly Meeting of Friends, are examined and compared with former editions” 1864 by Daniel Pickard. Printed by John Bellows, Steam Press, Westgate St. Gloucester

Extract 11.3 On the Sunday between my mother's death and her funeral I attended meeting for worship in Chichester. It was one of those blessed meetings that seemed designed specifically to speak to my condition. A Friend had been charged with the task of choosing an advice to read at the beginning of worship. One particular phrase from it struck me forcefully: 'Attend to what love requires of you.' It was a phrase that echoed and re-echoed in my mind over the days and weeks that followed. It was something to hold onto, something simple to bring me back to Center when things got overwhelming or difficult. I wrote myself a note and set it where I would be sure to see it in the morning of my mother's funeral. 'Attend to what love requires of you' and I breathed it in and out as I waited to begin the service, aware of the ocean of love and prayer support which was holding me up and reaching into me with its stilling, calming influence. I turned it into a query to ask myself each day and in each situation: 'What does Love require of me today?' 'What does Love require of me right now?'

Maggie Edmondson, 2008

Extract 11.4 *C. Wess Daniels visited a meeting where he found printed queries on the benches.*

I was impacted by these spiritually-directed questions this past week when I purchased a new / used bike for my commute. As I was trying to customize the bike to fit my needs I continued to battle the desire to really trick it out, add some of the really nice (i.e. expensive) parts to it to make it extra sweet. One query kept running through my head though, prompting me to wait and consider the choices I was about to make.

Do I recognize when I have enough?

See I've reflected on that query a few times in my morning prayer time and it came back to me at the most inopportune time! But I took it seriously and considered it. Because of it I changed my mind about some of the things I was going to do because they were beyond what I really needed. And that's it, spiritual formation consists in, stopping, reflecting and considering where our lives in Christ fit into the choices we make on a daily basis. This process takes a lifetime and I need all the help I can get.

<http://gatheringinlight.com/2006/09/25/some-borrowed-quaker-queries-on-simplicity/>

C. Wess Daniels, blog entry on webpage

"Gathering in the Light" Some (Borrowed) Quaker Queries on Simplicity

Corporate Experiences with Advices and Queries

Extract 11.5 Third day, the thirteenth of the month, the meeting was engaged during great part of the day in the reading of the queries and the answers, and in the consideration of the state of Society, as exhibited in those answers. On these subjects the minutes say:

Faithful responses to these searching and important queries develop, as in former years, deficiencies in the support of some of our various testimonies, and a lively concern was manifest in the meeting on this account. All the different testimonies which our religious society has felt itself required to bear, we have no doubt are firmly based on Christian ground; and Friends were entreated not to shrink from a faithful support of them, although, in so doing, in relation to some of them, we may be brought to appear peculiar and distinct from the world. The experience of this Society fully demonstrates that this very peculiarity has proved a hedge of safety about us, and that

loss has been sustained by those who have disregarded it. Friends were exhorted to undiminished zeal in the observance of those Christian practices which our discipline enjoins – that the standard of Truth may be still faithfully upheld by us before the world.

The British Friend, 9th. month 1854

Extract 11.6 *The Monthly Meetings in Iowa Yearly Meeting (Conservative) are asked to consider one query a month in meeting for business and minute a corporate response which is forwarded to the Yearly Meeting. A summary answer is chosen by the assistant clerk, read at Yearly Meeting session and printed in the Minute Book. The following is a response to Query 1 on Meeting for Worship.*

Friends have differing responses to and interpretations for many of the terms of the queries, such as worship, Holy Spirit, communion. Some described waiting with expectation or excitement, others more with openness, seeking to be ‘awake,’ sometimes with restlessness or fear. Some wait filling the silence with prior insights, familiar passages or memories. We are at different stages of learning to be silent. One looks forward to ‘clarity of word and thought,’ and is uplifted by that of others. One misses more verbal communication, and another fears that the Divine might be spoken and not recognized.

Minutes of Iowa Yearly Meeting (Conservative) 2000 in Queries and Advices with Selected Responses at <http://www.quakernet.org/Queries/IntroductionToQueries.htm>, p. 7

Extract 11.7 *In 2004, Canadian Yearly Meeting appointed a Consultation and Renewal Working Group (C’nR) to conduct a listening project throughout Canadian Yearly Meeting. Eight queries were sent to all active Monthly Meetings and Worship Groups. After meeting with all these groups, the C’nR reported the following to Canadian Yearly Meeting in 2006.*

Query 2. How can we openly engage with the diverse Quaker theology within our Yearly Meeting?

Many Friends and attenders seem to feel that a disinterest in theology is a requirement for being a Quaker. Others are very disturbed by this disinterest. The Consultation and Renewal Working Group believes that this Query raised the number one issue in Canadian Yearly Meeting – whether our diversity is causing us to become an ‘anything goes’ religion and will eventually result in us losing a coherent identity. Most Friends believe that we should be open to diverse theology and different points of view; however we tend not to engage with our diversity. We keep our points of view to ourselves because we often get burned by unpleasant or hurtful responses from others when we share. This seems to affect Christians more than others, e.g. ‘I believe in Jesus, but I wouldn’t think of mentioning it in a Quaker meeting.’ Christians feel silenced because it too often happens that others say (even in response to ministry in Meeting for Worship) that they are offended by Christian language. When asked about non-Christian/Christocentric tension most Friends agreed that it has created difficulties in their group and that the Christians are the ones leaving. This was often connected with the baggage that Friends and attenders have brought with them from other churches. Very few of us were born into Quaker families. We study our history because of difficulty with defining ourselves in the present.

On the whole appreciation was expressed for diversity of thought and practice. In fact, there was a strong sense that diversity is our main strength and attraction, along with the practice of being 'tolerant' and 'non-judgmental.' Our lack of creed and dogma, and the opportunity for each person to shape their own spiritual path is very important to Canadian Friends. Along with this is appreciation for the testimonies which were sometimes seen as the alternative to a creed. Some thought that we tend to use our testimonies as a creed. Alongside all the praise for diversity was a small but persistent voice that said yes but, we can't be all things to all people and we do have commonly held values which we should openly adhere to.

[*New query written by C'nR*] Can we learn to worship together using the different languages of our diverse beliefs and traditions?

"Responses to the Consultation and Renewal Working Group (C'nR) Queries and Thoughts on Canadian Yearly Meeting Gleaned from the C'nR Consultations with Monthly Meetings and Worship Groups," in the Report from the C'nR to Canadian Yearly Meeting 2006: pp.3-4 in #587 at <http://www.quaker.ca/cgi-bin/library/searchindex/search.pl>

Extract 11.8

In North Carolina Yearly Meeting (Conservative), monthly meetings consider a query each month and minute a corporate response which is forwarded to the Yearly Meeting. Every Meeting's response is printed in the Minute Book. The following is one Meeting's response to Query #7.

Query #7: Do we endeavor to live in the life and power that takes away the occasion of all war, seeking to do our part in the work of reconciliation between individuals, groups, and nations? Do we faithfully maintain our testimony against nuclear and all other military preparations, the bearing of arms, and all participation in war?

Rich Square Monthly Meeting: Our sense is that as a meeting we strive to be clear under the headings of this query. We recognize that being in harmony with all human beings requires being in harmony with the Divine. But we are constantly aware of areas in our lives in which we see the challenges in the query. There are always new parts of our lives that are opening for examination, such as disharmony with our place in Creation which can be occasion for discord and war.

*Minutes of North Carolina Yearly Meeting (Conservative) 2007, page 38.
Available at <http://ncymc.org/> click on Yearly Meeting 2007*

Extract 11.9 *In Mount Toby (MA) Meeting, the clerk poses a question after the opening worship of meeting for business. A period of worship sharing follows and the recording clerk crafts a minute expressing a corporate response.*

The clerk invites Friends to reflect on the question 'What are our hopes and expectations for the new clerk and meeting for business this year?'

Friends expressed a deep understanding of and appreciation for the spiritual foundations of Quaker decision-making and the way we conduct our meetings for business within the context of worship. Many see meeting for business as an essential

component of the Quaker experience and express hope that more of our community will be drawn into this aspect of Mt. Toby life.

It is important to find ways to let the meeting community as a whole understand what goes on in meeting for business beyond just reading the minutes. Attention to business is an underpinning of Quaker practice. In participating in meeting for business we understand how decisions are made. We see the respect that people have for each other and how we are guided by the spirit.

The regular change of leadership allows different clerks to exercise various gifts over time in the life of the meeting. The Quaker belief in continuing revelation is as true in meeting for business as it is in worship. The form is old and beautiful but there are still opportunities for innovation and new perspectives. Ideally our committees also function with a sense of ministry so that issues they bring forward to the clerk and to meeting for business are well seasoned and ready for discernment.

Friends appreciate the dedication of so many of our members who attend meeting for business year after year, decade after decade, and have carried with such commitment this body of care, concern, and action. It is important for those of us who have come more recently to embrace that commitment with more passion. It is important for us to come not out of obligation but because we see the value of it in the life of our meeting. Our hope is that meeting for business will instill a spirit in us that we can carry out in our daily life and in all our dealings with others.

Minute 2 of Mt. Toby Monthly Meeting 9/14/08

Uses of Advices and Queries

For meetings:

It has been a common practice for monthly meetings to use advices and queries for inspiration and to guide reflection on their spiritual health. Many meetings in NEYM currently read out an advice and/or a query on the day of monthly meeting for business, sometimes at the start of worship, toward the end of worship, or at the beginning of meeting for business. The selection may also be posted to read before entering the room where worship is held. At other times meetings have special gatherings to consider a query or a set of queries, often following a pattern of Worship Sharing where Friends can speak their thoughts and personal experiences during a period of worshipful listening. Some meetings have begun to write out responses to the queries as a thoughtful practice. Friends also develop their own advices and queries in response to current needs and insights.

For individuals:

Individual Friends use advices and queries as part of their personal devotional practice. Sitting with an advice or query can be a transformative experience. Allowing the words a prayerful space within us can lead to new insights. Sometimes we may have a sense of falling short of an ideal to which we want to aspire and after a time feel “the good raised up” within us. We may wrestle with concepts which are currently outside our experience but in which we feel the seed of truth.

One of the strengths of advices and queries as a spiritual tool is that we can return to them over and over again as we grow and change. Some embed themselves in our memory, emerging into our conscious mind at times to challenge or assure us. In the process of continuing revelation, new glimpses of truth are expressed in advices and new queries are formed to stimulate discernment.

History of the Advices and Queries:

Advices first appeared in the form of epistles sent among Friends to encourage and strengthen each other in their faith. The earliest surviving collection of Advices was issued from Balby in England in 1656.

Queries originally related to specific items of information requested of local meetings from central bodies of Friends. In NEYM Queries began in 1706 as “Inquiries” and were just that—inquiries into how faithfully Friends were adhering to “truth testimony.” By the 1740s, the Queries had expanded to include reports on the spiritual state of the meeting, the number of new convincements, and Friends’ faithfulness on matters such as refusing to bear arms and plainness of speech and apparel. What we might now call “right community behavior” was clearly set out in Yearly Meeting minutes, which were later collected as a Book of Discipline. The advices carried the weight of “correct” responses to the inquiries, and this correctness was often gauged by behavior. There were consequences for “incorrect” responses, including disownment of those continuing in unacceptable behavior.

New England meetings used the London queries until 1760, when the Yearly Meeting adopted its own queries (which can be found in *The Old Discipline: Nineteenth-Century Friends’ Disciplines in America*, Glenside, PA, Quaker Heritage Press, 1999, pp 201-203). The yearly meeting directed that the answers sent through the quarterly meeting to yearly meeting should be “full and explicit, comprising the substance of every part of each query, in order that this meeting, being rightly informed of the state of the church in general, the needful advice and assistance may be duly administered.”

In current New England practice, the queries are used as tools for personal and corporate spiritual self-reflection. We turn to our advices and queries as a guide to the well-ordered, Spirit-centered life, cherishing the insights of generations of Friends who have come before us. We trust the Spirit to show us how the unchanging principles of truth they contain are to be understood and lived by us in our present situations.