

Clearness Committees and Their Functions

What is a clearness committee?

A clearness committee is a group of Friends appointed to help a member of the meeting find clarity around a leading.

Friends may request a clearness committee from the ministry and counsel committee when they are considering a major life decision and would benefit from sitting in worship and answering discerning questions. This could include but would not be limited to when they are feeling called to some sort of service in ministry, such as traveling to other meetings, leading retreats, providing pastoral or chaplain care. Clearness committees are also part of the Quaker marriage process.

Part of this clearness process may include asking your meeting if they are also clear to unite with or behind you in this work.

How is a clearness committee appointed?

Practices differ from yearly meeting to yearly meeting and even among monthly meetings, so the first thing to do would be to see if there are guidelines in your yearly meeting's faith & practice discipline. If you do not have your own copy check your meeting library, otherwise many are carried for sale at [Quakerbooks](#) of FGC.

How does a clearness committee work?

A clearness committee's job is to help the focus person discover whether there is clarity to move forward with a matter, wait, or take other action.

This happens through:

- Worship together
- Deep listening to the questions & concerns brought to the committee
- Careful, gentle open-ended questions from clearness committee members
- Reflecting back what has been heard.

When clearness is not reached

Reaching clearness often means that the focus person and the committee find unity and insight around the issue. When a clearness committee does not reach clearness it may be for a number of reasons.

- The committee and the Friend seeking clearness don't share the same conclusions. It is always difficult when a Friend feels deeply led in a certain direction and a committee after careful listening is not in unity. Before we engage in clearness work everyone must be open

to the possibility that their initial sense may be changed, or that they may be mistaken in their understandings.

- The Friend seeking clearness is not yet ready and more preparation would be helpful.
 - There are times we are given the promptings of a leading so we become aware of things we need to do to prepare ourselves for service. For example, sometimes a person might have a leading to travel in the ministry, but they must first complete obligations before they can be released to travel and other times way simply seems to open despite obligations. A clearness committee can help us discern the difference.
 - Sometimes we can travel with a Friend more experienced in ministry before we are ready to move into the work ourselves.
- Friends are seeking clearness around the wrong question. Sometimes we can't hear the answers because we aren't asking the right questions.
- Friends have reached clearness, but it is not the clearness that they were expecting or hoping to reach and they don't recognize it as clearness.

In some cases, not reaching clearness is actually the best outcome for the time and place. The leading will not go away if it is a true leading and Friends will be given more opportunities to move forward as time passes.

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