

## *Mutual Care*

The spiritual welfare of a meeting is greatly helped if its social life is vigorous and its members take a warm personal interest in one another's welfare... It is our duty and privilege to share in one another's joys and sorrows.

Faith and Practice, London Yearly Meeting, 1960

### Advices

1. The Religious Society of Friends is a community of people who strive to care for one another. Friends are advised to maintain love and unity, to avoid tale-bearing and detraction, and to settle differences promptly in a manner free from resentment and inward violence. Live affectionately as friends, entering with sympathy into the joys and sorrows of one another's daily lives. Visit one another. Be ready to both give and receive help. Bear the burdens of one another's failings; delight in one another's strengths. Seek to know one another in the things that are eternal. Make the meeting a channel for God's love and forgiveness.
2. Cherished friendships grow in depth of understanding and mutual respect. In close relationships there is a risk of finding pain as well as joy. Open yourself to the workings of the Light within when experiencing or witnessing great happiness or great hurt.
3. Each of us has a particular experience of God, and each must find the way to be true to it. When another's words are strange or disturbing to you, seek to understand where they come from. Listen patiently and seek the truth that other people's thoughts may contain for you. Avoid hurtful criticism and provocative language. Be careful not to be too firm in your position; allow for the possibility that you may be mistaken.
4. Different ways of understanding the Divine are present in Intermountain Yearly Meeting. It is important that these differences not be ignored for the sake of superficial agreement. When they are recognized and understood, a deeper and more vital unity can be reached. From the wide diversity among us we can broaden our awareness of the spirit flowing through and among us. We are reminded to refrain from applying our prejudices to the life journeys of others. Our community is maintained through faith and fellowship with each other as we wait in the Light for the unity that draws us together.

## Queries

1. Do we trust sufficiently the goodwill of our meeting members and attenders to make our needs and concerns known? Do we love one another as becomes the followers of the Light, even to the point of sharing one another's burdens? Do we care for one another so deeply that each other's needs are recognized and addressed? As members of a spiritual community, do we actively work to maintain love and unity?
2. Is our meeting a loving, spirit-centered community in which each person is accepted and nurtured and strangers are welcome? In what ways do we incorporate people of different generations, members and attenders, and married and single adults into our community? On what occasions do we visit one another in our homes? How do we keep in touch with distant members?
3. To what extent does our meeting ignore differences merely to avoid possible conflicts? When conflicts exist, are they discussed calmly and patiently in an attempt to arrive at a creative resolution? Does our meeting, in appropriate ways, counsel any member whose conduct or manner of living gives cause for concern? Are we charitable with each other, being careful not to sully the reputations of others?
4. How well do we respect that of God in every person, even though the Spirit may be expressed in unfamiliar ways or be difficult to discern? In what ways do we welcome diversity of culture, language, and expressions of faith in our monthly meeting, yearly meeting, and the world community of Friends? Do we seek to gain from the range of rich heritages and spiritual insights that diversity presents?