

Spiritual Preparation for Recording Clerks

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I wanted to serve my meeting as a recording clerk. I needed advice. As a boy, I remember my mother at the clerk's table at New York Yearly Meeting, quietly writing, occasionally seeking clarification, methodically reading. So I called mom. She matter-of-factly told me to read her Friends Journal article on recording (friendsjournal.org/task-recording-clerk/). It starts with three paragraphs about Quakerism that lay the groundwork for the advice to come. I share these paragraphs with the hope that you too may find them a helpful reflection on our faith and practice.
—Mark Hoover, Ann Arbor (Mich.) Meeting

For me, the first step in all aspects of living, including recording the minutes of a meeting, is the personal practice of awareness of the Spirit. I can practice silence when I have to wait at a stoplight, or when I am walking down the hall to another meeting. It's as simple as relaxing my shoulders and slipping into a moment of silence. I might read a few lines of a spiritual calendar or book; I can bask in the beautiful long shadows of the rising or setting sun; I can record the day's gratitudes. The more I practice inner silence, the more I am ready for any task.

Bill Taber was a longtime released minister in Ohio Yearly Meeting and a noted teacher and spiritual nurturer of Quakers of diverse theological styles. He suggested that over time, as we practice silent worship alone and with others, we will learn to move into an "altered state of consciousness" as we enter a worship meeting for business. We will put on "joy" as we come together into community, then we will move gradually to "assurance": "It is as if we are entering into a stream, which I am fond of calling the Stream of the Quaker Process, which is as real as stepping into a stream of water." Taber ... advises Friends to enter into worship before a business meeting with "a strong inward intentionality." Ben Pink Dandelion, currently at Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre and the University of Birmingham, also reminds Friends ... that we are "open to new light ... a community of seekers," and he, too, remarks on the importance of our "intention: to be faithful above all."

So: First is daily practice. Second is the joy of gathering. Third is our intention to be faithful. Each participant in a meeting for worship with a concern for business is a consequential part of the whole, even if he or she is silent, for we all are part of the "Stream" Taber mentions. Each participant is partly responsible for the quality of the discerning, clerking, and recording.