The Handbook Revision Committee asks Friends and Meetings in reviewing these changes to not concentrate on individual words but to ensure that the meaning is adequately conveyed. Much time has recently been taken up with changes to individual words which did not alter the meaning of the revision, and hampered the work of the committee.

The text in red is the new proposed text.

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| ***Section 1.1.4.******Standing aside****Guidelines: ‘There is no such thing as ‘blocking’ the working of the Spirit within the meeting.**It is incumbent upon all members of the meeting to support the decisions of the meeting that have been made in right ordering’ (Roger Walmsley, this we can say, 2.37, 2003)*Rarely, a single Friend is not able to unite with a course of action which is otherwise clearly the ‘sense of the meeting’. In this case the Clerk must discern how to proceed and minute the matter.The dissenting Friend could be invited, or might offer, to unite with a minute, despite their doubts on the course of action.If the Friend has what is sometimes called a ‘stop in their mind’, they may wish to stand aside from the minute rather than join with it. This may signal a need for the Meeting to pause to consider more deeply, perhaps to lay the matter aside for future re-consideration. The dissenting Friend may hold an aspect of the truth which other Friends need to hear.It is sometimes the case that the Meeting and its Clerk feel that the contentious matter has been well seasoned, deeply thought through, yet the dissenting Friend is still not in unity. It may be that this Friend is not willing to stand aside.If the gathered Meeting for Worship for Business so chooses, the Clerk may record the minute with which the Meeting as a whole is in unity, noting that a Friend is not in unity with this decision.The name of a Friend who chooses to stand aside is recorded if they wish it.It is important that all voices are heard, and that the meeting listens with respect and empathy to Friends who are not in unity with the wider opinion. However, no Friend may in effect veto the matter before the meeting. | ***Standing aside and stop in the Mind*** *Guidelines:* “…*not being in unity may tell us that the discernment is not complete*.” (Ben Pink Dandelion, Living the Quaker Way, p. 18, London: Quaker Books, 2012)These expressions refer to the infrequent times when the Clerk discerns that the sense of the meeting is very close to unity on an action and a single Friend, or more than one Friend is not able to unite with this course of action. When this occurs, it is important that the Friend be given adequate opportunity to be heard in explaining their reasons for doubt.In this case the Meeting needs to discern how to proceed and minute the matter:* The Friend who is ‘out of unity’ could be invited, or might offer, to unite with a minute, despite their doubts on the course of action.
* If the Friend feels unable to unite with the minute but wishes to stand aside, this is accepted. They can be named in the minute if they wish, and if the meeting agrees. Otherwise, it may simply be recorded that one Friend stood aside.
* The Friend may indicate that they have a “stop in their mind” about the minute. In this unusual and serious case, unity has not been achieved and discernment on the matter is suspended. The matter can then come back to the Meeting after a period of time, during which the Clerk/s, Elder/s or other appropriate Friend/s may meet with the Friend to seek an acceptable solution, with the aim of attaining the unity of the Meeting.

Throughout this process it is important to give time for silent worship. Friends may well find that leaving time for a decision to arise may lead to a new and creative solution to which Friends can agree. Special care is needed where urgent decisions are required. | The Handbook Revision Committee and RMs have spent considerable time discerning and revising this section as Friends have also done in previous years.Seeking unity is a central to the Quaker process and the difficulty arises how we express in words what happens when Friends do not find this unity.We have looked for references to ‘Stop in the mind” and have not found them. We realised the responsibility of the Clerk and the Meeting to make decisions in a timely manner, as making no decision is also a decision that can have far-reaching consequences. However, what is an urgent decision for some Friends is not urgent to other Friends.We have added a sentence to the responsibility of the Clerk, section 2.3.4. about making decisions in a timely manner and this is a separate revision. SANTRM is not clear on why the Meeting would have the authority to elect not to record the name of the Friend standing aside if that is their expressed wish. |