

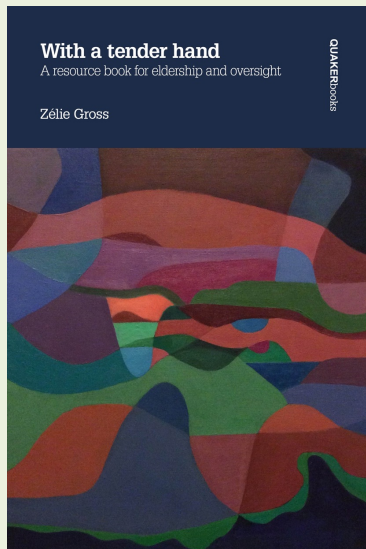
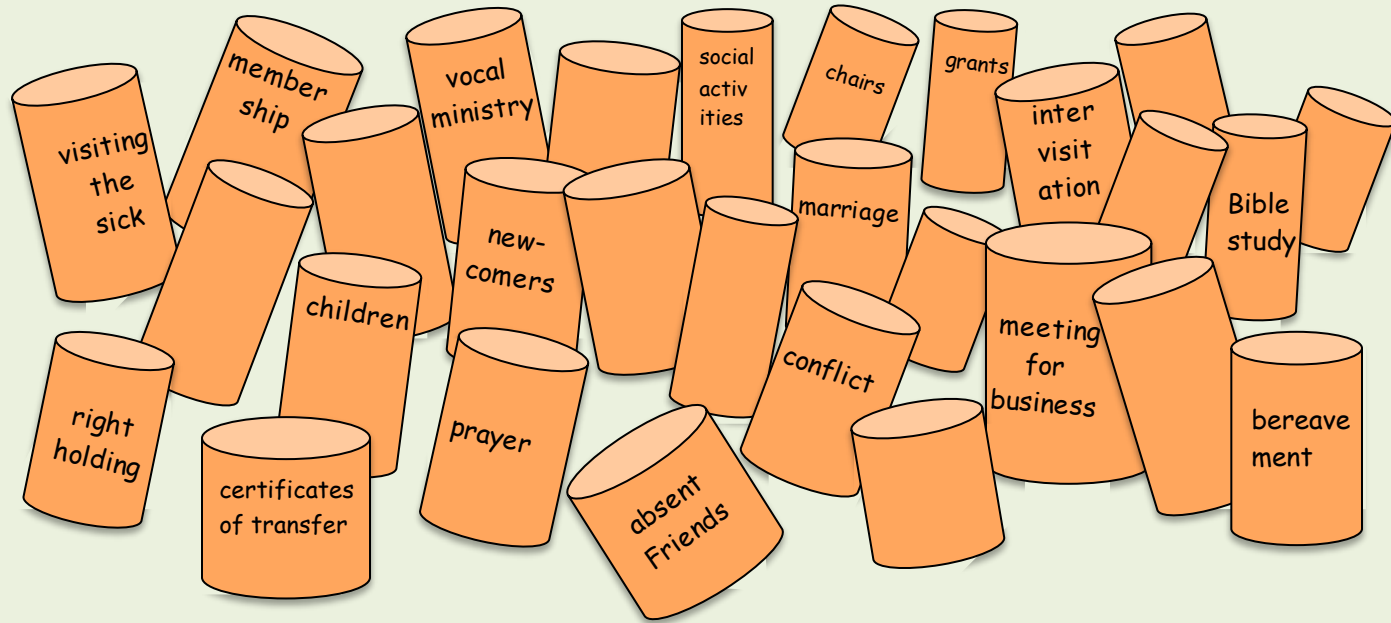
# CORKS & BOULDERS

*a metaphor...*

a way of looking at how we anchor our  
worshipping communities

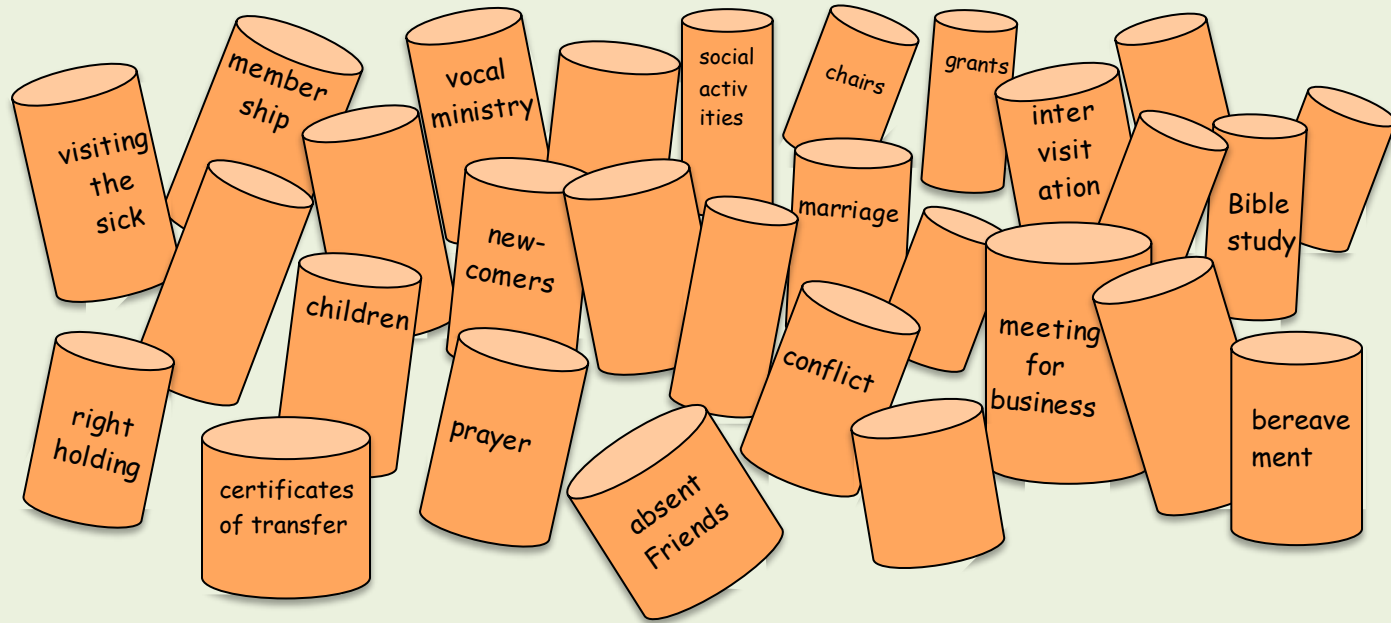
Presented in October 2023 at  
Quaker Life Representative Council

by Zélie Gross, author of  
With a tender hand



The metaphor of corks and boulders grew out of writing *With a tender hand* - commissioned to make guidance in *Qf&p* on eldership & oversight more accessible.

The lists of responsibilities in 12.12 & 12.13 are not easy to recall or focus on. An image that came to mind was of corks in choppy water – constantly in motion. I needed to look at them differently...



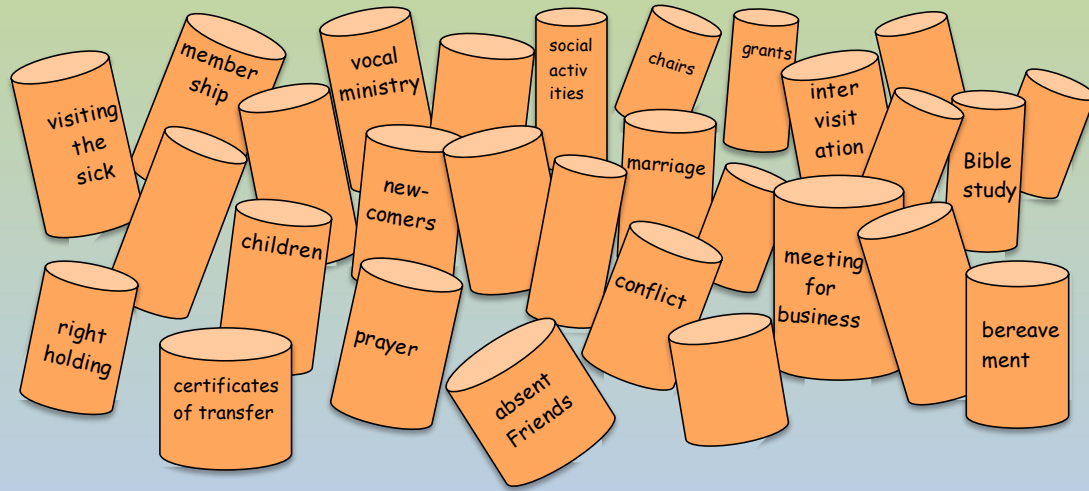
The approach I took was to question each responsibility, issue or task in both the eldership and oversight lists:

So – what’s underpinning that?

What’s essential here?

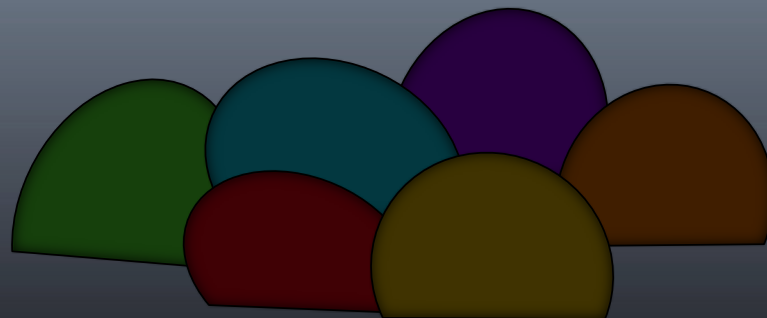
Where’s the life in this?

What am I failing to see?



As though looking down from the choppy surface to the sea floor, I visualized the answers to those questions as boulders – which didn't shift around with tides, waves and currents.

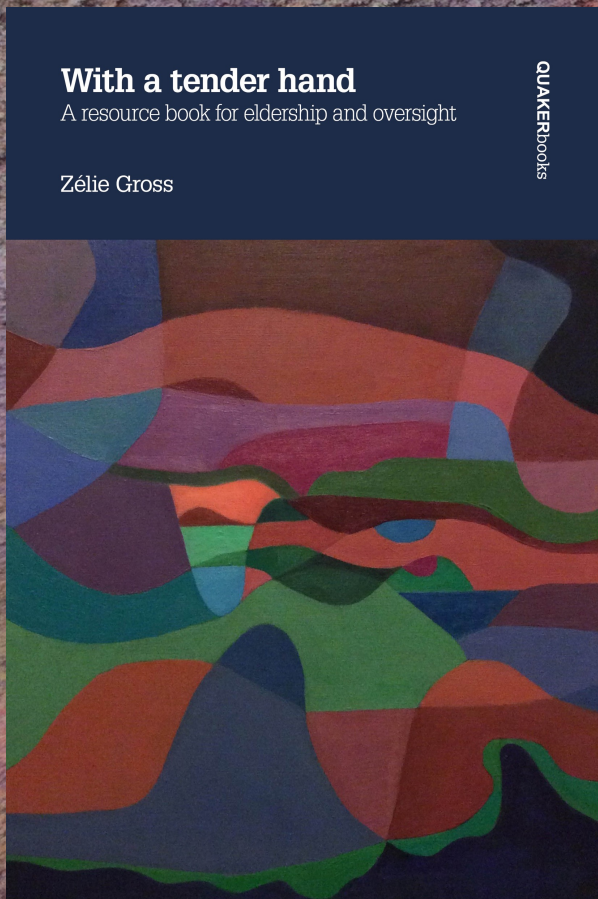
The corks might change (and they do) but we can stay anchored.



*These are the boulders I had in mind. Substantial and enduring, they cover the Baltic seabed from here in Estonia all the way to Finland beyond the horizon...*



Through writing *With a tender hand*, I identified six boulders underpinning the lists of responsibilities – and everything else in *Qf&p* Chapter 12  
and more, because things change and evolve



**The boulders became the book's 6 'Themes'**  
(as in the next slide)

and the modules of Woodbrooke  
Eldership and Oversight courses

more recently retitled:  
Spiritual Nurture & Pastoral Care



anchoring eldership  
& pastoral care

pastoral  
care

worship

community

caring

communication

leadership

The metaphor of corks & boulders has many uses beyond where it started.

It invites us to see what underpins, or anchors, the occupying busyness of jobs to do, duties to fulfill, action to take, connections to make,

everything we do and want to do to in our meeting communities...

The questions I asked of *Qf&p* Chapter 12 apply equally to all of this:

What's underpinning that?

What's essential here?

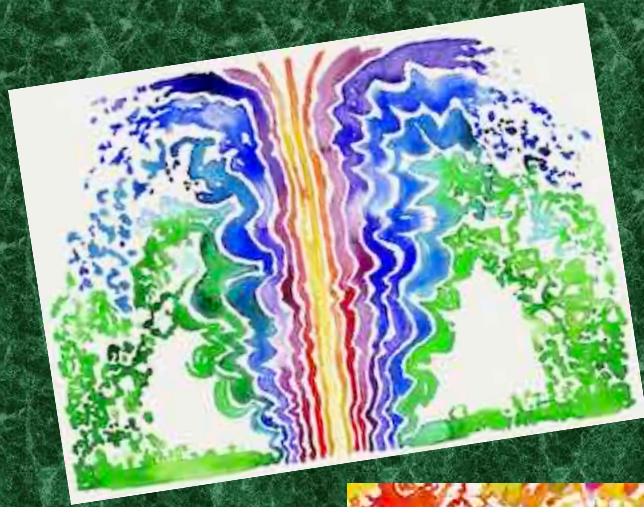
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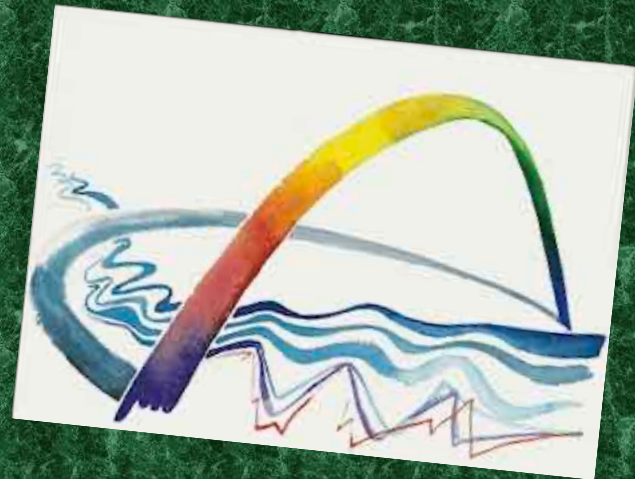


In 2015, Meeting for Sufferings approved an important piece of work which helps us focus on what really matters to Friends, to **who we are...**





Our faith in  
the future



we are well  
known & widely  
understood

we work  
collaboratively

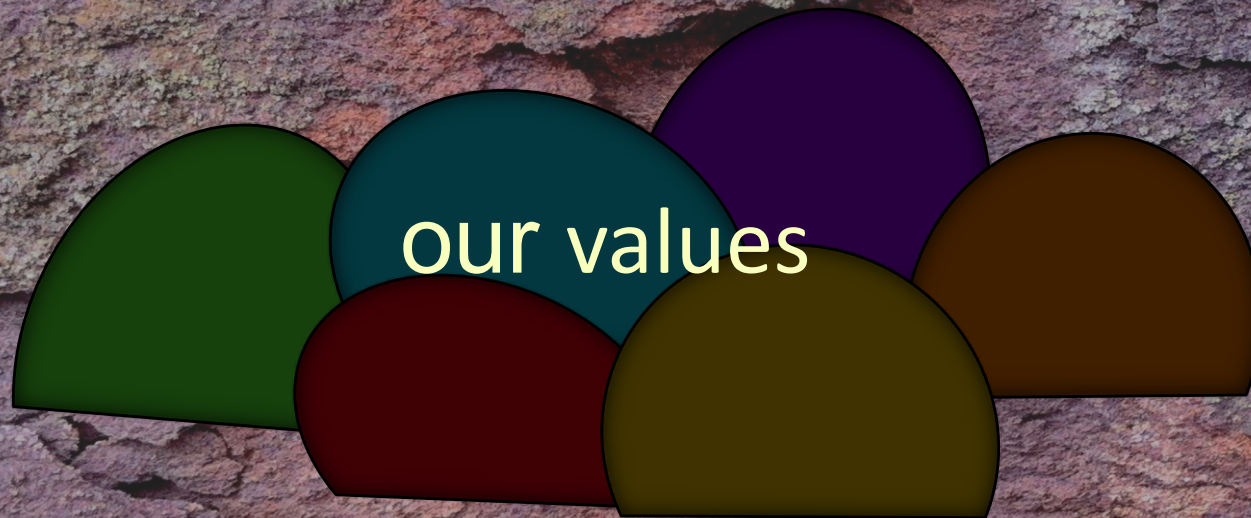
our  
communities are  
loving inclusive  
& all-age

we understand  
& live by Quaker  
discipline

our values  
are active  
in the world

meeting  
for worship  
is our bedrock

Many Friends see Quaker values as fundamental to who we are and what we do. These values are encapsulated in another set of underlying 'boulders'



Just as Baltic boulders moved with the ice sheet and are moulded by their environment, our values endure but how we describe them changes with the times...



equality &  
justice

simplicity &  
sustainability

our testimony  
*(sometimes 4  
sometimes 5 or 6)*

truth &  
integrity

peace

*what canst  
thou say?*

Friends also tend to agree that being Quaker isn't about what we say but what we do – how we witness to our faith. And for some Friends this is the most important expression of their Quakerism.



There are many more focuses of Quaker witness than the few in the next slide...



climate  
justice

sanctuary  
everywhere

building  
a fairer economy

peace  
education

peace  
building

ecumenical  
accompaniment

British Friends share a central spiritual practice of silent worship, which *Our faith in the future* describes as our bedrock.

Many Friends have other spiritual practices too, which are important to them. Is spiritual practice a significant, or the most significant, anchor for you?



our spiritual practice

The next slide names just a handful...



body prayer

mindfulness

meditation

spiritual  
accompaniment

journaling

experiment  
with light





Why do we need boulders?



**Sticky-note**

**silent**

**brainstorm**

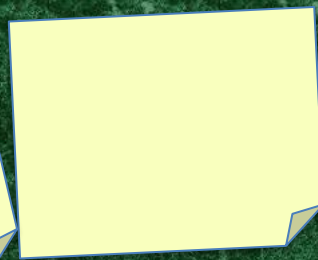
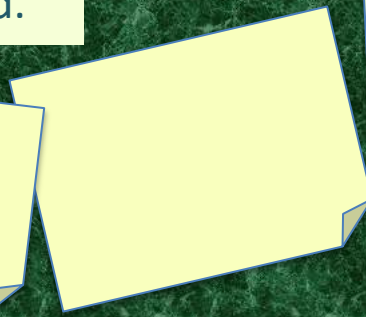
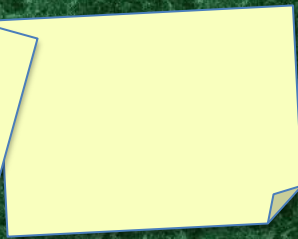


Your own tasks,  
busyness, jobs,  
preoccupations,  
needs and wants,  
Quaker & other...

In your group, quickly jot down the  
← **'corks'** →  
in your life as a Friend and in the  
life of your meeting. Stick them all  
on a backing sheet (one per group).

We're gathering material that  
might show our need and our  
meeting's need to be anchored.

All the work of your  
meeting: the organization,  
activities, responsibilities,  
needs, commitments,  
plans, issues, hopes...



In case this leaves you feeling there's just too much to do and too few people to take on roles...

...we can contribute in many smaller ways, which make a big difference.

showing  
up

willing  
to learn

sharing  
a role

helping out

staying  
anchored

mentoring

just one  
task

getting  
involved

being  
present

offering

being  
alongside

self care

thanking

staying in  
touch

A photograph of a rusty, dark brown anchor resting on a rocky and pebbly shore. The anchor is positioned diagonally, with its shank pointing towards the bottom left and its flukes pointing towards the top right. The shore is composed of various sized rocks and pebbles, some in shades of grey, brown, and blue. Patches of dry, yellowish grass and small green plants are scattered across the shore. In the background, a body of water with a blueish-grey hue stretches across the frame. The overall scene is somewhat desolate and evokes a sense of being anchored to a place.

the boulders anchoring you?

the boulders anchoring your meeting?

## Working individually

1. Think of the fundamental things that anchor you, *personally*, as a Friend. These may be very different from other Friends' 'boulders'.
2. Using stiff paper in different colours (not too dark) cut out at least two boulder shapes large enough to write on and arrange them on a contrasting backing sheet. Each person has their own backing sheet.
3. Name your boulders and add whatever detail and words you feel are significant. Add further boulders if they occur to you.



your boulders?

## Working as a group

1. Now discuss in your group the fundamental things, which you think anchor your meeting community. You might not agree on them all.
2. Cut out at least 4 boulders and name/describe them. You may want to consider the relative size of your boulders – and maybe the shape
3. Arrange your meeting's boulders, as many as you like, on a large sheet of paper (one per group) and stick things down when you're ready

