



# *Benefits of Affiliation with Friends General Conference*

Friends General Conference is an association of fourteen yearly meetings or regional groups, and nine directly affiliated monthly meetings. It is a network of "Friends serving Friends." FGC exists to increase communication among unprogrammed Friends, to bring Friends together across yearly meeting lines, to enrich the spiritual life of the Religious Society of Friends, and to provide resources and services to Friends and Friends meetings. It is not a governing body. It does not establish policy for its member meetings, or seek to speak for the Religious Society of Friends.

FGC services are available to all Friends and attendees, regardless of affiliation. Current FGC programs and services include:

- QuakerBooks of FGC (the FGC Bookstore);
- Quaker Press of FGC, publishing materials to nourish the spiritual life of Friends and Friends Meetings;
- The Annual Gathering of Friends, held during the first week in July;
- Religious Education and spiritual enrichment materials for children and adults;
- Small conferences and workshops;
- An annual Young Quakes conference for high school age Friends;
- The Traveling Ministries Program, which arranges for seasoned Friends to visit meetings requesting such support;
- Couple Enrichment Workshops and Retreats;

- The Friends Meeting House Fund;
- **[www.QuakerFinder.org](http://www.QuakerFinder.org)**, a new website offering a searchable directory of Friends meetings and worship groups in the U.S. and Canada;
- The new Committee for Ministry on Racism, helping Friends overcome old prejudices and open doors to diversity.
- The new Youth Ministries Committee works with other committees to support younger Friends and build authentic intergenerational ties within Quaker communities.

These services and opportunities are available to all Friends and Friends meetings.

## **So, Why Affiliate?**

- Affiliation connects you to a network of Friends in the United States and Canada. The chance to meet and work with Friends from distant meetings is exciting. It's like discovering you are part of an enormous family you never knew you had.
- Affiliation lets your voice be heard. All meetings have important insights and experiences to share. There is no center of authority in FGC; we learn from each other as we come together to work and worship.
- Affiliation helps your meeting become more familiar with the programs and services offered by FGC, and more likely to take advantage of them.

- Affiliation gives you a voice in shaping FGC programs and services. Most of the work of FGC is done by volunteers, particularly those who serve on our 175-member Central Committee. As an affiliate, your yearly or monthly meeting would appoint one or more representatives to Central Committee, based on the meeting's total membership.
- Service on the FGC Central Committee provides wonderful opportunities for spiritual growth. FGC is committed to "modeling" Quaker process, including business sessions grounded in worship, and decisions made on the basis of corporate spiritual discernment. One member wrote of our annual Central Committee session:
 

I won't just say that I was deeply touched, because what touches you is outside of you; I was deeply moved and that is within me, still. After it was over . . . I found myself so moved by the many powerful messages, emotions, and actions experienced from Thursday through Sunday that I had to pause, head in hands to gain composure and to honor the experience with silence and stillness - and not a few tears and deep breaths. And this was from attending to what was at its essence a three-day meeting for worship for business! Imagine that!
- Service with FGC provides many opportunities for personal growth. FGC program committees provide a broad field of action for those with particular concerns, including religious education, interfaith relations, ministry and spiritual development, publications, social justice and outreach. On Central Committee, Friends from your meeting can use their gifts in the service of others, and gain valuable Quaker experience through practice and leadership.

## What does Affiliation Cost?

As an affiliate, your monthly or yearly meeting would be expected to make it possible for your representative(s) to travel to Central Committee meetings. You would also be expected to make an annual contribution to support the work of FGC. Regular annual yearly meeting contributions to FGC vary widely according to the size and financial resources of the yearly meeting. In fiscal year 2006, yearly meeting giving ranged from \$400 to \$32,000. The average contribution, based on the giving of all fourteen affiliated yearly meetings, was \$3.24 per capita. Ten of our fourteen affiliated yearly meetings give more than \$2.10 per member. It is left to your meeting to discern the appropriate amount.

## What about Dual Affiliation?

FGC sees itself primarily as a service organization, not a separate branch of the Religious Society of Friends. Several of our yearly meetings are also affiliated with Friends United Meeting, and include programmed as well as unprogrammed monthly meetings. We do not expect our affiliates to alter their identity or give up other ties or affiliations. In fact, we welcome this kind of cross-fertilization, and we believe it enriches our shared spiritual life as Friends. FGC wants to serve Friends and nourish their spiritual growth, not define their beliefs or direct their spiritual journey.

## Summary

Affiliation with Friends General Conference is as much about serving as being served. As Friends, we have much to offer each other, and much to learn from each other. The mission of Friends General Conference is to help nurture vital Quaker meetings, so that Quakerism remains an opportunity for transformation in the world. We would be glad to welcome you more fully into our network of "Friends serving Friends."