

Process and Procedures for a Yearly Meeting to Affiliate with Friends General Conference

Background

Friends General Conference, a Quaker organization originating in the unprogrammed tradition of the Religious Society of Friends, serves the needs of Friends and meetings by providing and helping to disseminate resources and opportunities that educate, inspire, and empower Friends in living their faith. FGC pursues this mission through the work of numerous volunteers organized on committees such as Long Range Conference Planning (LRCP-responsible for the Gathering) Christian and Interfaith Relations Committee (CIRC- responsible for our presence in the wider faith community) and Committee for Nurturing Ministries (CNM- responsible for supporting our exploration and development as a people of Faith). Current FGC programs include planning and oversight of the Annual Gathering of Friends and other smaller regional conferences, preparing, selecting and overseeing publication of resources useful to Friends for their religious education, outreach, anti-racism work and other forms of spiritual nurture. FGC also distributes a wide range of books and materials to Friends through Quakerbooks of FGC (formerly the “FGC Bookstore”).

In general, FGC’s resources and programs are available to all Friends. The Annual Gathering, the youth programs, the Bookstore and religious education materials, and the Friends Meeting House Fund are services used by Friends everywhere. Groups affiliate with FGC to participate in setting priorities and planning and implementing FGC programs through their appointees on Central Committee. These Central Committee representatives bring knowledge of the strengths of their meeting to share with others. They also bring back knowledge of resources available and ways other Friends are meeting the challenges and opportunities they face, as well as experience with the wider world of Friends and with Quaker business process in many settings.

FGC endeavors to be faithful in its Quaker practice, believing strongly that in worship and openness to God, the right order of business will emerge, and that in worship Friends can discern God’s guidance for decisions and choices. Membership on Central Committee involves fellowship with Friends from all over North America; consideration of business, budgets, and new leadings with other experienced Friends; and working together to nurture and educate Friends and seekers. Friends working together across yearly meeting lines are in a position to be aware of the current and emerging issues and concerns of Friends, to address these concerns when appropriate, and to learn how others are addressing them.

Governance

FGC is governed by the Central Committee, which is composed primarily of appointees from the yearly meetings, associations of meetings, and monthly meetings affiliated with FGC. Central Committee is responsible only for the programs and policies of FGC and not for those of affiliated yearly and monthly meetings. Currently, affiliated yearly meetings and regional associations of meetings are asked to name two appointees to Central Committee for every 500 members (groups with fewer than 1000 members are asked to name up to three representatives). Each directly affiliated monthly meeting may name a representative to Central Committee; however, current practice suggests consortia of meetings (two or more) from a given region send a single representative. Central Committee makes policy decisions about FGC programs and approves the annual budget. Members of Central Committee are also asked to serve on at least one program or administrative committee.

Affiliation Procedure

When a yearly meeting, association, or other group of meetings, is ready to consider affiliation with FGC they should write to the FGC Committee for Nurturing Ministries (info@fgcquaker.org) outlining their interest. The Committee for Nurturing Ministries considers the situation and either meets with the group or appoints visitors to meet with members of the group to consider the request and possible affiliation more fully. When Friends are clear that affiliation is appropriate, a formal letter of application is prepared. Then the Committee for Nurturing Ministries, acting on behalf of Central Committee, will consider the application and present a recommendation to Central Committee for its consideration.

An affiliated yearly meeting or association of Friends is expected to name an appropriate number of appointees and to support their participation in Central Committee functions to the extent possible. One Central Committee member is also appointed as the group's representative to FGC's Executive Committee, which generally meets two or three times a year. Yearly meetings are expected to cover the costs of appointees (as needed) as they attend the annual sessions of Central Committee, and provide some financial assistance with travel by one representative to Executive Committee also.

Affiliated groups are also expected to contribute financially to the support of FGC programs to the extent possible. There is no set amount expected and per-member contributions vary widely. Affiliated groups also provide the FGC office with an updated mailing list twice each year. While those using FGC services may receive other mailings, FGC sends up to three mailings per year to all Friends on the yearly meeting lists to invite participation in and support of its programs and services. FGC does not share its mailing list information with other organizations.

Currently Affiliated Yearly Meetings and Regional Groups (5/2019)

Alaska Friends Conference, Baltimore YM, Canadian YM, Illinois YM, Intermountain YM, Lake Erie YM, New England YM, New York YM, Northern YM, Ohio Valley YM, Philadelphia YM, Piedmont Friends Fellowship, South Central YM, Southeastern YM, Southern Appalachian YM and Association.

Directly Affiliated Monthly Meetings

Central City (NB), Davis (CA), Heartland (KS), Five Rivers (Horry County, SC), Fairhope (AL) Grass Valley (CA) Manhattan (KS), Starkville (MS), Wyoming (WY), Olympia (WA), Oread (KS), Sacramento (CA), Topeka (KS).

Resources for Further Information

These include the FGC Annual Report, "Explanations about FGC and Expectations of Appointees to FGC Central Committee," "Committees within FGC," program brochures, and other materials. Those wanting a very detailed explanation of FGC structures should consult the Organizational Blue Book. Any of these may be obtained by emailing, calling or writing us at 1216 Arch Street 2B, Philadelphia, Pa 19107; (215) 571-1700, info@fgcquaker.org.