

**EXPLANATIONS ABOUT FRIENDS GENERAL CONFERENCE
and EXPECTATIONS OF APPOINTEES to the FGC CENTRAL COMMITTEE**
(for yearly meeting nominating committees, directly affiliated monthly meetings,
and for prospective Central Committee members)

What is Friends General Conference?

Minute of Purpose:

Friends General Conference, with Divine guidance, nurtures the spiritual vitality of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) by providing programs and services for Friends, meetings, and seekers.

Major Goals

- 1. Nurture meetings and worship groups.*
- 2. Provide resources and opportunities for meetings, Friends, and seekers to experience the Light, the living presence of God.*
- 3. Help meetings guide Friends to discern the leadings of the Inward Teacher and to grow into ministry.*
- 4. Transform our awareness so that our corporate and individual attitudes and actions fully value and encompass the blessed diversity of our human family.*
- 5. Work to grow and sustain a vital, diverse, and loving community of Friends based on a shared search for unity in the Spirit.*
- 6. Articulate, communicate, and exemplify Friends' practices, core experiences, and the call to live and witness to our faith.*
- 7. Promote dialogue with others, sharing with them our corporate experience of Divine Truth and listening to and learning from their experience of the same.*

(Minute of Purpose adopted by FGC Central Committee, 10/21/09)

FGC pursues its mission through program committees, assisted by nine administrative committees, a staff of approximately twenty (several of them part time), and numerous volunteers.

In FGC, we believe 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. FGC endeavors to be faithful in its Quaker practice within its large Central Committee and within all its smaller committees throughout the year.

How Yearly Meetings Form the FGC Central Committee:

The Central Committee (approximately 175 Friends) consists of Friends appointed by the yearly meetings affiliated with FGC, plus others coopted by action of Central Committee or those invited to participate as ex-officio members or observers. The Central Committee is the governing body of Friends General Conference. FGC's original philosophy, vigorously alive today, is that Friends in a working relationship across yearly meeting lines are in a position to be aware of the current and emerging issues and concerns of Friends within monthly meetings, and that full opportunity to address these concerns is one of the basic reasons to accept an appointment to the Central Committee.

The following summary of FGC policies and procedures describes how the Central Committee and its Executive Committee are formed.

1. Each affiliated yearly meeting or association is asked to appoint **at least three members** to the FGC Central Committee for a term of three years. (Each of the nine directly affiliated

monthly meetings also appoints one member.) For larger yearly meetings, appointments are proportional to membership, with **two appointees for every 500 members**. (If a yearly meeting membership is 1,000, then 4 people should be appointed.)

2. Affiliated meetings with three or more appointees name one-third of the appointees each year for a term of three years. Staggering terms helps to maintain continuity and organizational memory.
3. A yearly meeting appointment may not be made for more than two consecutive terms (a limit of six consecutive years), though Central Committee members may be co-opted for two terms after their six-year term as yearly meeting appointees expires.
4. Affiliated meetings are encouraged to make the ages of their appointees reflect the age range of the meeting and to include the appointment of younger members of your YM. To assist in this, FGC will provide child care and other assistance at CC to meet the needs of those who have parenting responsibilities.
5. The group of people from the yearly meeting named to the FGC Central Committee should select one of their members to act as clerk of the appointees from that yearly meeting and to represent the yearly meeting on the FGC Executive Committee.
6. **Affiliated yearly meetings are encouraged to cover travel costs of appointees to the Central Committee meeting once a year if at all possible.** FGC also appreciates the financial assistance which many yearly meetings give to assist with the travel expenses of one yearly meeting appointee to Executive Committee meetings (generally twice each year). Many committee members cover all or some of their travel expenses to FGC meetings. However, FGC wants committed Friends to be able to serve on its committees regardless of ability to cover travel expenses. **FGC is able to provide financial assistance to Friends as necessary.**
7. **Clerks of affiliated meetings** are included on the Central Committee list and serve **ex-officio**. Participation in Central Committee is welcome, with an invitation to join standing committee work as time and interest permit. **Executive staff people** of yearly meetings and other Quaker organizations with staff are listed as **observers**, receive Central Committee mailings, and are also invited to attend Central Committee.

What the FGC Central Committee Does

FGC works to build hard-working, spirit-based committees within the organization which are focused on specific interests and gifts and, from this strong base, to produce resources and activities which effectively nurture Friends and meetings.

All appointees have a double responsibility:

1. **To work on a particular program or administrative committee.**
2. **To discern the rightly ordered governance and direction for the whole organization.** Friends are often attracted to specific program work first and, as they become more experienced and involved, come to accept broader responsibilities for the whole organization. Our programs thrive to the extent that committee members participate fully and responsibly throughout the year.

Expectations of Central Committee members:

FGC asks a lot of Central Committee members. All are expected to:

1. **Attend the annual Central Committee meeting**, usually Thursday evening to Sunday afternoon on the third or fourth weekend in October. This is when most program committees and several administrative committees meet and when Central Committee adopts its program plans and the budget for the next year. All Central Committee members are expected to help govern the organization and assume responsibility for its policies, programs, financial health, and financial support.
2. **Serve on at least one program or administrative committee**. These committees meet one, two, or three times a year in different cities (hosted by local meetings) in addition to the Central Committee weekend. Committee members also accomplish much work in small subcommittees and task groups, allowing Friends to communicate by telephone and e-mail without requiring travel each time.
3. **Attend the annual FGC Gathering of Friends, if possible**. In addition to first-hand experience of worship, work, and play with Friends from many different yearly meetings, the Gathering offers a place where issues of current concern are addressed and action is planned.
4. **Keep FGC informed about the needs and concerns of their respective yearly meetings**. This is facilitated by meeting with the other FGC representatives in one's own yearly meeting at least once a year to discern those needs and concerns.
5. **Interpret FGC's purpose, programs and resources to one's own monthly and yearly meetings**. Again, a meeting of appointees is encouraged at least once a year to plan how best to present FGC to the yearly meeting.
6. **Consider an annual financial contribution** to FGC's operating fund, and invite other Friends within one's meeting to support the important work of FGC.

Participation in FGC generally costs money. The work of FGC is spread over much of the North American continent, and travel distances and costs are a continuing factor for appointees. Most yearly meetings cover the costs of attending the annual Central Committee meeting. Friends who need help in order to attend other FGC committee meetings are encouraged first to ask their monthly meetings for financial assistance. However, FGC can provide assistance with travel costs for many Friends to attend committee meetings. Most Central Committee members find their involvement with FGC extremely rewarding as the work of FGC strengthens the whole community of Friends. .

If one is unable to attend the Central Committee meeting, one's yearly meeting is encouraged to appoint an alternate who then should attend as a full participant in the weekend. Anyone who finds that s/he is no longer able to participate actively in Central Committee or a standing committee is urged to ask her/his yearly meeting to select a replacement.